

**A Short History
Of The Life and Struggles of
Bishop Francis Hodur**

By BOLESŁAW R. BAK

A Short History Of The Life and Struggles of Bishop Francís Hodur

By BOLESŁAW R. BAK

Printed in Scranton, Pa., 1954

Copyright 1954 by the Author



Dedication

I humbly dedicate this work to all those co-workers of the Organizer, bishops, priests and laymen, who, by their faith, devotion and struggle, made the existence of the Polish National Catholic Church possible and insured her further growth and development.

AUTHOR

Preface

This book presents a living portrait preserving the full realism of the facts regarding the work of Bishop Francis Hodur and his co-workers, and their struggle with the elements which tried to imprison and enslave various sections of the Polish population in the United States. The material for this publication has been taken from church records and the newspapers.

The author has tried to grasp this history of a vital struggle for freedom of the soul in a clear and straightforward manner accessible to all readers.

The latter years of Bishop Hodur's activities have been generally touched upon, because they concern the present.

I have written this work in Scranton, Pa., in 1946.

AUTHOR

We Confess . . .

Today, before God, the Father of all people, the most Holy Spirit of Freedom, Love and Justice, and before the whole world, we confess that we honor and love America; and we do solemnly swear to be loyal to her for all time. Among other things, for the reason that her laws made possible the founding of free religious institutions such as our own church and insured the existence and growth of this church. In another country an all-powerful hierarchy, representatives of Rome could have very easily crushed an insignificant church of the people, but they could not accomplish that in this country, in America, under the wings of the Free Eagle and in the shadows of the the Stars and Stripes.

From the deep yearning for the pure Gospel of Christ and for individual freedom; from the tears, the humiliation and even from the blood of the beaten and neglected Polish people, arose an overwhelming need for the organization of a free Christian Church.

The exalted words contained in the great charter of American freedom were our inspiration and our guarantee that the heirs of Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln, would not allow the representatives of Rome to repress those citizens of Polish extraction who were engaged in the same work in the affairs of religion and the Church as those great men in the affairs of politics and the state.

Therefore, it follows that we are justified in placing the principles of the Declaration of Independence on an everlasting pinnacle alongside the laws of Jesus Christ pronounced on the Mount of Gelboim (Olives). Let us, then, review the words from the Declaration of Independence:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by

their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness."

The authority of the Roman Catholic Church over us, could not be made to conform to the propositions contained in the charter of American independence. It was contrary to Christ's legislation for His church and to the original character of the Catholic Church. For that reason we broke away from the autocratic and monarchic Roman Catholic Church, and organized, with the help of God, a Christian and Catholic Church, called the Polish National Catholic Church. Its cornerstone is Jesus Christ, its foundation is apostolic, and its source of teaching is the Holy Scripture and the combined conscience of the people and the Priests making up the religious congregation.

We believe with all our being that God created the Polish National Catholic Church so that it might be the source of truth and sound faith; the guardian of the oppressed, and the harbor of all who, in seeking the Highest Being are seeking the goal of their life on earth and of their life beyond earth.

And today our Holy Church is expanding in numbers and in her beneficent influence. Her ideals, taken from the Holy Scripture, from the lips of the Divine Teacher, from the Declaration of Independence of the United States and from the books of the Polish philosophers and poets are implanted in the life of the Polish Community. (From Bp. F. Hodur's writings.)

50 YEARS OF CULTIVATION IN GOD'S FIELD
BY BISHOP FRANCIS HODUR

“And the man rode out to his field in the springtime in order to plough his ground for sowing. It was still cold, but the rays of the sun announced that the time for sowing, germinating, budding, blooming, happiness and fortune, was near at hand . . . And so he followed the plough, glorifying God, Who Created everything, Who Loves everything and Guides to an assigned goal.”

Chapter I

Early Years

On April 1st in the Year of Our Lord 1866, Francis Hodur was born of John and Mary Hodur. He first came to see the light of day in a little village, Zarki, in the County of Chrzanow, about 35 miles from the well-known ancient capitol city of Krakow, Poland. The parents of Francis Hodur were farmers, who owned only a very small farm from which they derived no profit or gain, and which demanded hard labor and exertion. At that time living conditions in Galicia were in a pitiable state. It is not surprising, therefore, that poverty and hunger were experienced by the child, Francis Hodur. Very often indeed, his parents were unable to produce sufficient subsistence from their small farmland to satisfy the hunger of their family.

So it was that at a very early age, young Francis would spend long hours, meditating over the sad plight of his beloved parents. His boyish heart ached at seeing those he loved so dearly, toiling ceaselessly to keep the family alive at the pre-harvest season during the months of April, May and June. It is not strange therefore, that this love and compassion for the impoverished played an important part in his later life. The work in behalf of the laboring class, undertaken with such zeal and earnestness, was the manifestation of his devotion to the needs of the suffering.

Due to a misunderstanding between the teacher and a Roman Catholic Priest, and upon the request of the latter, the four-grade schoolhouse, the only one in Zarki, was closed for a period of time. When it was finally reopened, Francis Hodur was already 10 years old, and it was then that he was allowed

to begin his studies by learning the Alphabet. At the age of 13, upon hearing a great deal about the famous city of Krakow from the lips of his tutor, Francis decided to journey to that city in order to enroll in a High School there. Upon discovering his secret ambitions his mother was both happy and sad. She shed tears of joy and also tears of pain. Joy filled her heart upon learning that her son desired to further his education and some day become a Priest, but she was greatly saddened upon realizing that due to their poverty, it was impossible for them to give financial assistance to their beloved Francis. However, she gave him her Blessing and then packed him a bag containing the best of everything they had in the house. Thus young Francis started his 35-mile journey on foot to Krakow to enroll in St. Anne's High School.

Life was very difficult for the poor boys in the large city of Krakow. It was very often necessary for a few boys to live in a single, small room, where they were forced to sleep on benches and on the floor. The buildings were damp and this resulted in the boys catching cold and running fevers. They thrived mostly on soup. Actually the only aid these poor students received was from student dormitory groups organized to provide not only a place to live at low cost, but also to supervise the studies of the boys and to give them medical assistance when necessary. It was with one of these dormitory groups that Francis Hodur lived. In order to earn his living and also to send help to his parents, who could send him only small amounts of food from time to time, Francis taught the younger and less capable boys, for which he received meager reimbursement. Because of the fact that giving these lessons took up so much of his time, he was forced to stay up very late at night in order to keep up with his own studies and lessons.

Even though Francis was one of the smartest boys in his class, because of his poverty, he was shunned by most of the boys and even some of the teachers. However, he thrust aside all temptations which arise in the lives of young people, keeping faithfully to his studies; and so in the year 1889 he graduated with honors from High School. Realizing that he

was now mature, Francis Hodur began seriously thinking of his future. There were many courses of study which appealed to this young man. Which should he choose? What ought he to study in order to acquire the knowledge that would aid him in his later work among the working people from whom he came, and whose fate greatly concerned him?

Very deeply and thoroughly he considered the prospect of studying Polish and foreign literature. Fundamentally, he reviewed the lives of the greatest reformers and teachers of the world and also the causes and histories of social revolutions and disturbances. What profession to follow? These questions persisted in the mind of one, whose heart and soul were dedicated to the poor working people. Finally, he made his decision. A God-given gleam of hope which had already surged through his heart when still a young boy, while sitting in his class in the little school-house in Zarki, now flamed brightly in the soul of Francis Hodur. "The sole aim of my life is to become a Clergyman. I have to be a Priest! Because only through being an obedient and humble servant of Christ and being His faithful follower, will I be able to work for the people, in order to uplift and sanctify them." Thus a young man of integrity dedicated himself and his life to God's Cause and to the cause of the people. Thus, in conformity with these thoughts and this decision, Francis Hodur enrolled as a student of Theology in the University of Krakow. Besides his studies in Theology and Philosophy, he secretly became an ardent student of the works of the famous Polish authors: Adam Mickiewicz and Julius Slowacki.

An important point in his life was his work among the youth of the nation. Thoughts of a free Poland surged deeply and warmly in the hearts and souls of the pupils and teachers alike, throughout the school. There were in existence numerous patriotic youth organizations which held evening debates. Proclamations were drawn up; and in these activities we find Francis Hodur, young, energetic, and ambitious, doing his part. Because of his quick comprehension and quick insight, he began to move toward the head of this Youth Organization. His speeches carried away his fellow

students. His committing to memory of numerous poems by Polish and English writers astonished his professors. His work and studies took up all his time. Everything he did was for his friends; he didn't have time or didn't want to think of himself.

Meanwhile, dark clouds began to appear over the head of the young patriot. His deep interest in the cause of the suffering people and his thoughts of freedom for them and their country were noticed by the Austrian Monarchy. There is a Polish proverb that says: "The wind always blows sand into the eyes of the poor". So it was in the case of Francis Hodur. His efforts were beginning to be halted and thwarted. The patriotism shown by him did not meet with the approval of the Austrian Government. And further, his efforts to aid and ease the burdens and sufferings of the farmer and the laborer were not approved of by the Roman Catholic clergy or the nobility. As if a magic wand were waved, all entrances and exits were closed; and he discovered that even his closest friends turned their backs on him because they feared the wrath of the authorities. The band around personal freedom was steadily tightened. Francis Hodur, the son of a poor Pole, a member of the lowliest class of people, not only in Galicia but in the whole world, did not have an opportunity for self-defense. He was not considered a person but rather a thing to be shoved aside, kicked or thrown away. Such was the situation under the authority of the "great" Roman Catholic Priests who profess the teachings of Jesus Christ and brotherly love — in books only. For Francis there followed a period of sadness, because the doors of the schools of Krakow were closed to him, and his name was crossed off the list of students in Roman Catholic Theology.

Chapter II

Voyage To America

*O, Beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain;
For purple mountain majesties,
Above the fruited plain.
America, America, God Shed His Grace on Thee;
And Crown Thy Good, with Brotherhood
From sea, to shining sea.*

(Song — America the Beautiful)

How beautiful are the words of the song describing this country, America! America the beautiful and the free. You are truly a Paradise, the summit of the dreams of all the persecuted people in the world; the land of joy and freedom. The light of freedom with its rays was drawing great multitudes: the ragged, the poor, the persecuted fighters for equality, freedom and justice. They were drawn from all the corners of the world without regard for race, color or creed.

For a long time multitudes were streaming into America. The peak of emigration was finally reached towards the end of the 19th Century. At that time the emigration of masses of Slavonic peoples began. These were mostly Poles, who came from all three sections of conquered Poland. People sold everything they owned; they used all possible means they knew, they endangered their health and often times even their lives, in order to be able to get to America and taste that which their souls longed for, and which was forbidden in Europe — FREEDOM!

When the Poles completed their mass emigration they

entered upon a renewal of life in a hospitable land. But they were very poor — poor physically and spiritually. They were sorely in need of Priests, teachers and leaders.

Francis Hodur was thinking of the wonderful country that was America. He well knew that if he remained in Galicia under the conditions existing there, he would waste his energies and his talents. He knew that the irreconcilable foes of the oppressed would pursue him and place him in prison just as they had done with the like defenders of the people such as Rev. Stanislaus Stojalowski and Ignacy Daszynski.* It is not strange therefore, that Francis Hodur decided to sail for America. He definitely believed that in America he would be able to realize his childhood dreams of becoming a Priest and thus to put himself in a position to work for the bread and freedom of the poor.

Due to the lack of sufficient funds, Francis had to travel on a freighter together with others of similar circumstances. Regardless of the fact that often they were without bread and warm food, the spirit of the passengers was high. There was joy on the faces and in the hearts of the travellers, because, after all, they were on their way to that dreamland — America! In those days the trip from Europe to America lasted many weeks; the passengers getting more excited and impatient with every passing day. One gray morning through the fog which covered the bay of New York, there could be seen the outline of the Statue of Liberty. A shout of joy came from the very hearts of the passengers, who had come from nearly every country in Europe. Leaning against the railing of the dirty ship, they watched the gate through which they would pass, and which would take them into the country of their dreams.

Among these people, wearing an old ragged coat, stood Francis Hodur. He stood and gazed at this symbol of freedom — that freedom about which he had read and heard so much. He knew from memory almost the entire history of the struggle for independence of this wonderful country. For, indeed, supporting Washington and the American Patriots were many Poles: Kosciuszko, Pulaski, Rogozinsky and many

others. These men stood shoulder to shoulder with the best men of America, bound by a kindred spirit, united by a single cause, and going forward continuously in their crusade and dedication toward a new dawn of freedom. From the blood, pain and sweat of Americans and of those who were to become Americans was born a new nation, a new empire; and because it passed through a baptism of fire and bloodshed, it became pure, free and just. Considering this, the tears soon began to fall down the cheeks of young Francis; after all, the struggle and strife for such ideals were part of his boyhood experience. There is no greater satisfaction for a person than in the conviction that if he dedicates his life to the deliverance and sanctification of his fellow men, he can know peace and can possess the blessing of Almighty God.

The whistles and shouting abruptly put a halt to these thoughts passing through the mind of Francis Hodur. The boat was approaching the harbor of a little island unknown to him. Here at Ellis Island, each one of the emigrants had to undergo a medical examination and here they received any information or advice they needed, and finally, if they had somewhere to go, they were allowed to leave the island. Francis had neither relatives nor friends in this country. He knew no one — he was alone, forsaken, hungry and without proper clothing. However, he did not lose faith even for one minute. The hospitable American government provided food and shelter, but according to the law, he could not leave the quarantine quarters until he had found some well-wishing person who would guarantee his independence and furnish him work. For that reason Francis decided to write a letter to the Editorial Staff of the Polish newspaper "Kurjer" in which he told who he was and where he was located. By a strange coincidence this letter caught the attention of the rector of the Polish Roman Catholic Church in Nanticoke, Pa., whose name was Rev. B. Gramlewicz. Greatly interested in the contents of the letter and intrigued by the personality of young Francis, Rev. Gramlewicz decided to bring him to Nanticoke, Pa. He sent his assistant, Rev. A. Zychowicz to the port. The latter promptly complied with the immigration

regulations and was able to return to Nanticoke with Francis.

Francis was greeted by Rev. Gramlewicz with friendliness. After a few days the clergyman became fond of the young man and bought him new clothes and also decided to help him finish his theological studies. He consulted the head of the Scranton Diocese, Bishop O'Hara, asking that Francis Hodur be accepted into one of the Roman Catholic Seminaries. At that time there was a shortage of Polish Priests, consequently, Bishop O'Hara approved the Dean's request and Francis was sent to St. Vincent's Roman Catholic Seminary in Betty, Pa. After a few months of intensive study and after passing all the examinations at the Seminary, Francis Hodur was ordained in the Priesthood on August 19, 1893 by Bishop O'Hara.

The dreams of his early childhood came true, thanks to the goodness of Almighty God and thanks to the hard work, perseverance and help of friends. In order to show his gratitude, Rev. Francis Hodur gave his entire being to the work before him. He worked with great ardor as assistant in the Polish Roman Catholic Church in Scranton, then in Nanticoke, next as curate in the Slovak Roman Catholic Parish in Scranton, and still later as curate in Nanticoke. He organized sodalities, published a newspaper, directed amateur plays; all in all, he administered to the people in the spirit of the teachings of Jesus Christ. He became widely known to great numbers of people throughout the entire coal region, and his rectory at the Polish church in Nanticoke became a Mecca for all who needed counsel.

*Rev. Stanislaus Stojakowski — Representative to Austrian Parliament and leader of the Polish Peasant Party.
Ignacy Daszynski — A Representative of the Socialist Party — later became president of the Polish Sejm.

Chapter III

The People's Struggle For Freedom Of Ideals

As mentioned in the preceding chapter, the end of the 19th century saw the mass migration to the United States of the Slavonic races, mostly Poles. These immigrants settled by thousands in various cities, but they tended to concentrate in cities where they could find work easily. Such a place was the anthracite coal region.

The Polish people are, by nature, sturdy and willing workers. The mines and mills of a newly industrialized America employed them by the thousands. It can not be denied this new source of manpower was a substantial factor in the development of the young country. Intensely devoted to their religion, the immigrant Poles organized a great number of parishes, built beautiful churches, schools and shelters with the money which they had earned by hard labor. Unfortunately they believed in the Pope almost more than in God. It is not strange that they placed all their confidence in the Bishops and Priests, who soon became masters of their souls and bodies. Prior to the year 1883 the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church were aware that the moral authority of the Church alone would not suffice to keep European immigrants in servile submission in a country where freedom of religion and belief was guaranteed. They decided, therefore, to introduce a centralized and arbitrary system by which they could seize church buildings, schools, halls, orphanages and cemeteries and could make them the exclusive properties of the Bishops as sole owners or managers in each diocese of the

Church. Resolutions embodying this plan were passed at the Baltimore Synod in 1883. From that time on, every Catholic village, with all its buildings and settlements, built with the money, labor, sweat and blood of the poor people, was given over to the favor or disfavor of the Bishop. And the Priests became mere agents of the Bishops and could be removed from a parish without first having a canonical trial. This new system greatly agitated the Poles for, in a short period of time, they had built a large number of churches in America. The curates assigned to the parishes by the bishops and archbishops were priests whose ambition was to come into the good graces of their Bishop and thus under his protective cloak to rake and ruin the people. Rev. Francis Hodur often observed that outcasts from cloisters, though wanted for various crimes in Europe, were protected by the Roman Hierarchy and that these criminals were permitted to prey upon innocent people for their own enrichment.

The parishioners built the churches, beautified them; paid the bishops for cathedrals, hospitals, shelters, and seminaries more or less without complaint. If, sometimes, they lost patience and started an uprising, the priests and bishops would call the police and they would quickly bring about order. They were denied the right to assemble in protest before their own churches, because the bishop had the title to the buildings. Their bitterness was frightful. The incidents that took place in some of the Polish Roman Catholic parishes in this country would compel an observer to recall the horrors of the Spanish Inquisition. We will pass over the evil done to a bewildered people. However, it should be mentioned that the situation reached a grave tension in many cities throughout the United States. In Chicago the parishioners under the leadership of Rev. Melcuszna, organized a parish despite the wishes of the Bishop. So did Rev. A. Klawiter in Buffalo, N. Y. In Detroit, under the leadership of Rev. Dominic Kolasinski the people were in conflict with the Bishop for 8 years and were excommunicated. In Cleveland, Rev. F. Kolaszewski built a church and signed it over to the people; and in Chicago, Rev. A. Kozlowski took 10,000 people from under

the jurisdiction of Bishop Fyhan and established a Polish branch of the Old Catholic Church. Similar scenes were taking place in other smaller communities. These are the best proof of the fact that the Roman Catholic Hierarchy in its relations with the people overstepped the bounds of Christian morality.

As in other cities the spark of dissatisfaction began to burn slowly among the people in the parish of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary in the city of Scranton, Pa. It centered upon the elimination of clerical abuse and the recognition of a parish committee. This was a committee to aid the parish priest in managing the church property. Alas, neither the curate nor Bishop O'Hara paid any attention to the pleas and adjurations of the representatives of the people. In fact, Rev. Aust began to criticize publicly, curse and threaten the people from the Pulpit. But they were not intimidated. Their bitterness was not less. They sent a delegation to clearly inform the bishop that if the conditions at the church were not improved, the situation would lead to serious conflict. Bishop O'Hara proved inexorable, and spoke these unforgettable words: "Very Well!"*

Then one Sunday in October, in the year of Our Lord 1896, great throngs of worshippers pressed from all sides toward the Polish Church of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. A large crowd gathered around the church, curious, deeply stirred and uneasy. Everyone was discussing the fact that neither the priest nor the bishop had any intention of listening to the pleas presented to them by the committee.

Suddenly someone gave the order: "Brothers, form a wall between the rectory and the church, and do not allow the priest to enter the church. He is not worthy of offering up a Holy Mass for us. We built the church and are, therefore, on our own sweepings." But he was mistaken, because less than 10 minutes after the lines were formed a shout was heard. Then scores of policemen began beating the defenseless people, and started to push them through the streets. "Don't give up, because this is our own land", came a cry from the crowd, and the battle began. On one side women, men — both

young and old — some gray — with bare fists, and on the other side, the police armed with clubs, revolvers and handcuffs, fought for a short time.

Suddenly the moaning of the women drowned out all other sounds and in that moment, the walls of the church became painted with Polish blood. The crowd became frightened and soon their fervor cooled. Then the police began to arrest the subdued leaders. The following were handcuffed and taken to the local prison: A. Swierkowski, S. Rumowicz, W. Sznyter, M. Ptaszynski, J. Urbanowicz, M. Sowka, A. Silakowska, J. Chojnowska and W. Wentland.”** Had these asked for more than justice? Was it not justice that they be granted the right to share in the control of the church funds? Were the poor expected to finance the extravagant living of the Priests? Who were these Priests that lorded over their flock, unapproachable and scornful? They had been called to preach the Gospel of Christ but instead abused the humble. What of the Bishops, the guardians of the weak? It was futile to ask for justice. The Roman Church called upon the civil authority to settle a Christian quarrel. A Christian asking questions about the management of his church would soon find himself treated as a lawbreaker and threatened with imprisonment.

The people now regarded their church with horror — their place of worship had become for them a place of defeat, despair, bitter in the memory of the blood that was shed. Peace was there no more. This SAD AND BLOODY SUNDAY WAS THE DAY OF THE BIRTH OF THE FREE POLISH CHURCH IN AMERICA. From this moment the people began to think of building a new church. Bishop O'Hara agreed to this and even consented to bless the cornerstone, as if wanting to atone for the wrong which had come to them. In the end, however, he definitely refused to give his blessing. Thereupon the committee went for counsel to Rev. Francis Hodur, who at that time was curate at the Holy Trinity Church in Nanticoke, Pa.

*Nowe Drogi (New Roads) by W. Warega.

**Nowe Drogi (New Roads) by W. Warega.

Chapter IV

A New Road

The delegation comprising the injured members of the parish of Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Scranton, were cordially greeted by Rev. Francis Hodur. After listening to their complaints and sorrows, Rev. Hodur advised that the new church which was being built in Scranton be signed over to the people, and that its construction be continued, even if the bishop would not consent. "He, Who Guides the Fate of the world, Almighty God, will point out the way to the poor, aggrieved people".*

When the group returned to Scranton, the people accepted the counsel of the well-wishing priest and the erection of a church was carried on with greater energy. The church named St. Stanislaus, the Bishop and Martyr, was born in the winter of the same year. It was decided at that time to look for a suitable Pastor, who would continue the work now that it was begun. There were a few capable priests in the vicinity, who desired to undertake the task. From the many candidates, the assembly of the church members decided unanimously to invite Rev. Francis Hodur. When they notified him of their decision, he accepted the invitation, and came to Scranton in order to take up the leadership of a newly created parish. The evening of March 14, 1897 was a memorable one. Throngs of people greeted the priest upon his arrival. Rev. Hodur spoke those unforgettable words to them: "We will go forth without fear. The laws of the people are stronger and holier than the privileges of bishops and priests, so the Almighty God will intercede on your behalf. He, Who is the source of truth and all laws, will lead

you to ultimate victory. Remember that I stand here before you without the knowledge or the will of the bishop. For that I will be excommunicated and persecuted, but I am not afraid of any excommunication or any punishment. They are going to frighten you, throw a veil over your eyes, cheat you, swear at you, and thus the words of our Master which He spoke to His Apostles will be fulfilled: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice, and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy; (John, 16:20) The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father, the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother, the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; (Luke, 12:53) They shall put you out of the synagogues; (John, 16:2) And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake, but he that endureth to the end shall be saved (Mat., 10:22). So do not be alarmed, because our case will not fail. Your bravery will set an example for other Polish settlements, and just as we sing the praises of the Apostles today all over the world, who carried unafraidly the cross of Christ from the waters of the Euphrates to the banks of the Tiber, so the future Polish generations will speak your names with reverence. For this difficult and great task let us look for light and counsel to Him who said: 'I am the way, the truth and the life (John, 14:6); I am the light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life (John, 8:12).' And now, in ending, bless you brothers and sisters and companions on your thorny road. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."*

Throughout the hall there reigned unbroken silence. With open mouths they listened to the voice of Rev. Hodur. His words comforted the torn hearts of these unhappy people and were as a balm for their wounds. Their heads became bowed much the same as when a scythe is moved over a field, and then they all bent their knees. Here and there, there could be heard the sighing and sobbing of the women. Soon murmurs and then shouts of happiness filled the hall. The eyes of

that audience became enlivened and glowed in tribute to their leader. Four hundred hands were raised to show that his followers were ready to act; they would work, strive and even lay down their lives for this holy cause. Thence began a new life for them. The words of Jesus Christ were being fulfilled:** "And Ye shall be hated of all men." On the following Sunday Bishop Hoban came to the parish of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and publicly suspended Rev. Francis Hodur. He threatened his followers with horrible punishments in Hell. Those, who were prudent did not become frightened at these admonitions and scorned the threats of the bishop. But a few of the women fainted from fright. When it became evident that the group under the leadership of Rev. Hodur was earnestly getting to work, their opponents began to publish a paper entitled "Przeglad" ("Review"). This paper was controlled by a few fanatic Roman Catholic priests. Having the blessing and the moral support of the Roman Catholic bishops, they began to revile Rev. Hodur and those associated with him. The attacks were so vicious that even some of the loyal Roman Catholics were offended at the conduct of their leaders.

Rev. Hodur, desiring to shield himself from these false accusations of the Roman Catholic press, established a weekly newspaper "Straz" in April, 1897. In it he parried the accusations of his antagonists, pointed out the sins of the Roman Catholic Clergy, and reviewed the whole litany of wrongs inflicted on the people. The contest became so sharp that in a short time the Roman Catholic camp brought three lawsuits against Rev. Hodur. They were without scruple in their attempts and went so far as to accuse him of many outrages and crimes which he never committed. There were numerous trials, but Providence watched over the valiant leader, and protected him from the revenge of irreconcilable enemies.

Several Jesuit Priests of reknown arrived in Scranton and joined the controversy. They preached many sermons. They brought with them many miraculous statues, rosaries, medals and other items seven-times blessed, in the style of the slandered Tetzl.** They made threats and stirred up the people

to numerous plots and deceits. These were futile. The campaign failed, because the people did not want to leave the "cursed heretic Hodur" as he was referred to by the Roman Catholic Preachers.

On July 4, 1897, Rev. Francis Hodur dedicated the new church in a ceremony witnessed by innumerable people from Scranton and vicinity.*** The idea of the free, reformed church, spread like wild fire among the Polish settlements. The Roman Catholic Bishops watched with alarm the progress of Rev. Hodur and the people who were united with him. They wondered how they could stop the budding of a church that was Polish and free. How to break up and ruin the work of the people, who were fighting for the freedom of their belief? They finally decided, as a last resort, to excommunicate Rev. Hodur.

Yet they hesitated to carry out their decision, because of a rumor that Rev. Hodur was preparing to make a trip to Rome. On the basis of this rumor, they came to the conclusion that Rev. Hodur was making the trip to Rome for the purpose of retracting his errors; to humble himself and to place himself under the jurisdiction of the "infallible" Pope. They became happy about this. The bomb burst when, at the beginning of the year 1898, Rev. Hodur actually left the United States and sailed, by way of Poland, to the Citadel of the Roman Catholic Church: Rome.

In the opinion of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy in America, the end of the life of the free Polish Church was coming near. They awaited with disdain the mass return of the rebellious heretics. The Roman Catholic priests rubbed their hands together gleefully, because they would now be able to take their revenge on these rebels. Once and for all they would teach these "clowns" to "have faith, listen and remain silent."

*Taken from a chronicle by W. Warega (New Roads).

**A dealer of sacred images.

***Bishop O'Hara took \$100.00 and promised to Bless the cornerstone, but under the influence of Rev. R. Aust, he later refused. All this came to light during the court action.

Chapter V

Rome Is Deaf To Pleas and Entreaties

"O Poland, your ruin lies in Rome!" (J. Slowacki)

Having listened to the complaints of thousands of people, and bearing a petition signed by 5,000 wronged Polish immigrants, Rev. Hodur sailed for Rome. He intended to present the situation to the Pope and to plead for a little leniency on behalf of the Polish people in America. The document which he carried, contained three basic proposals: (1) That ecclesiastical estates should be the property of those Polish parishes that built and support them; (2) That each parish be allowed to select a Parish Committee without the intervention of the Bishop and Curate; (3) That the Bishops should not assign a priest as curate of a parish without the consent of the people.

He travelled to Rome in a circular route by way of Poland. In Galicia, Rev. Hodur met the famous tribune of the people, Rev. S. Stojalowski, who advised him to first visit the famous Papal Almoner, Rev. O. Cormier, upon his arrival in Rome. He acted accordingly. The memorandum, he carried, was delivered to Rev. Cormier, who in turn passed it on to the Propaganda Prefect of the Faith, Cardinal Ledochowski. Having talked with Rev. Cormier and Cardinal Vanutelli, Rev. Hodur believed there was no hope of the people's pleas being considered favorably. And he was right in this assumption. Cardinal Ledochowski, after familiarizing himself with the contents of the petition, announced in a cold manner that the plea definitely could not be complied with. He continued: "The rules passed at the Baltimore Synod and approved by His Holiness the Pope, Leon XIII apply to all

Catholics without exception. Who listens to them and abides by them, is a member of the church; who does not, is an outcast of the church. So the Pope will do nothing for the Poles”.

Despite his disappointment, Rev. Hodur turned to other dignitaries. After confiding in them, they made this revealing statement: “For the needs of the Vatican we use and require around 13 million liras annually. Three fourths of this amount is supplied by the bishops in America. In view of these needs, can we expose the American Bishops? A sound policy dictates that we sacrifice the Poles rather than our American profits. Therefore, my good man, do not expect a successful settlement of your case. We would heartily advise you, dear sir, to forget about everything. Leave the Poles in America to their fate and continue with your work as curate under the jurisdiction of your Bishop and you will come out the best by this method.”*

To these words, Rev. Francis Hodur replied with determination: “I can not. I swore as a priest that I would serve God, not Mammon. You have to listen to God, more than to people. I will not betray my Saviour nor His people. Thank you, and goodbye.”

He had nothing more to do in Rome. He journeyed cautiously through Italy, because he had been warned that the Roman Catholics might seize him and hold him in a cloistered prison for the rest of his life. Thanks to Divine Guidance, he returned safely. He was greeted enthusiastically and with unrestrained joy by the waiting people. On the second Sunday of March, 1898, members of the parish heard his report of his mission to Rome. If the people believed that the laws passed at the Baltimore Synod were reasonable, and if they could serve God under these laws, and live happily as Poles and Christians, he would notify the Roman Catholic Bishop that they desired to return under his protection. He, Rev. Hodur, would never return to Rome!

“Well, neither will we return!” replied Mr. Michael Szczyglinski. At these words, everyone in the hall arose and with raised hands as a symbol of their unbreakable spirit

cried: "We will not return! We will not return! We will not return!"

Enthusiasm stirred all those, who were present. After some time the people became quieted and Mr. M. Szczyglin-ski made the following motion, which was seconded by Mr. A. Swierkowski: "We Polish men and women, members of St. Stanislaus B & M Parish in Scranton, Pa., having heard the report of Rev. Francis Hodur, have come to the conclusion that we have no reason to return either to the Roman Catholic Bishops in America nor to the Pope in Rome. It is evident that our reasonable pleas, regarding our rights, will not be heard, therefore, there is nothing left for us to do, but to give ourselves to the will of God, and work with Rev. Hodur, our leader, for the good of our souls and for the freedom of the Polish people in America."**

Bishop O'Hara and Bishop Hoban were notified of this decision. After conferring with the Papal Delegate Martinelli, they excommunicated Rev. Hodur and his followers. On a memorable Sunday, Rev. Francis Hodur, standing on the pulpit after Holy Mass, unrolled the copy of the Papal announcement of excommunication and began to read the document in a resounding voice . . . "And therefore, because he scorned our admonitions" — a deathly silence reigned throughout the church. People held their breaths, as he continued to read . . . "Following the advice of the devil, he remained stubborn. We, upon the decree of Almighty God, in the form of the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost and all the Saints, no less than in the name of our own authority to bind and unbind on earth and in heaven, do ban him from receiving the Holy Bread and Blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ, from the community of Christians, and from passing the doorstep of our earthly and heavenly mother — the Church. We are throwing an Anathema on him and are giving him to the devil and his angels until he breaks away from Satan, corrects his life, and saves his soul from ruin. We are giving him to the devil for the damnation of his body, so that he can save his soul. And now, let everyone repeat after me: 'Let it be thus! Let it be thus! Let it be thus!'"

When the document was read and explained Rev. Hodur burned it, and requested that the ashes be thrown into a nearby creek. "After this ceremony there arose in the church indescribable fervor. Some rang bells, others sang and prayed to God aloud, others embraced one another; and others surrounded Rev. Hodur, who was descending from the pulpit. They greeted him as if he had just arrived from another world. Those who were most excited, jumped over the balustrade and pressed him to the altar, crying loudly: 'God is with us, Father! He will not leave His children; God is with us!' It seemed that in this moment the people changed; the spirit of strength, faith and courage was present in this group of Polish people, who were beginning a new, free life and who were exposed to great hazards."***

Without moral satisfaction, because they saw nothing extra-ordinary resulting from this excommunication, the Roman Catholic Bishops decided to ruin the first freedom-inspired action of the Polish people in Scranton with a single blow, once and for all. They commanded all of their subordinate priests in the Scranton diocese to read from their pulpits the excommunication of Rev. Hodur and his followers on October 2, 1898. The reading was to be accompanied by the solemn tolling of the bells. This ceremony made an impression on a large number of Roman Catholic fanatics of all nationalities.**** In a short time a storm of religious persecution broke upon Rev. Hodur and his followers. They could not walk the streets in peace. They suffered the shame of being spat upon; became a target for mud and stones. They were refused work in the mines and factories. All of this was being done at the instigation of the Roman Catholic Bishops, and Priests in the name of Christ our Lord and His Holy Church. By brutal force, lies, and fanatical hatred they tried to sweep away from the city of Scranton those, who revered the truth and desired to remain free.

*Cal. N.S. 1926 p.29 (Alamac Nat'l Union 1926, page 29)

**"33" (Grand Book "Thirty Three")

***"33" (Grand Book "Thirty Three")

****The only one who did not read the excommunication, was Rev. Chalcarz, of Mill Creek, Pa. (Now Hudson, Pa.)

Chapter VI

Death In The Offing

With Truth, Work and Struggle — We Will Be Victorious
(Slogan of the National Church)

In those days the energies of the majority of the Polish Roman Catholic Priests were directed toward wealth; and, they even resorted to extortion. They feared strange masters in the mitres of Bishops. Christ's Gospel of love, goodness, and justice ceased to be the theme of the preacher's sermon. Instead, the people were left to speculate upon the fantastic Roman Catholic theories of how priests rule over God, and about heaven and hell. The priests initiated curious games and sports where the young and old could drink themselves into unconsciousness. These popular diversions increased the clerical incomes. The priestly promoters won for themselves the prestige of the affluent.

Rev. Hodur no longer desired to live under those conditions and in such an atmosphere, and for that reason, he left the Roman Catholic Church. He left this mighty, world-wide organization so that with a small group of people and priests he could organize a new institution. He felt and believed that according to the dictates of his priestly-Polish conscience he must act thus. God commanded it! He considered his decision to act thus, a virtue, the most beautiful moment in his life, and the deed as inspired by God, a deed so very necessary in the history of the Polish people. The larger part of the Polish-American Priests and even the Bishops thought that Rev. Hodur's break with the Roman Catholic Church was only temporary. They figured that the poor Priest would

resist for a while and then weaken and return "ad vomitum suum" just as thousands of other Priests, who had tried to break away from the Roman Catholic harness. This time they were badly mistaken.

Rev. Francis Hodur at the head of his small group started an unflinching battle against abuse and crime. He began a vital struggle for life and death. The wronged from all neighboring areas drew close to him. His excommunication stirred the more intelligent of his followers to even greater efforts. They began to organize and to fight against the abuse of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy in almost all the Polish Roman Catholic parishes. A day of judgment came even to those. Here is a picture of what was happening in the nearest Polish Roman Catholic parish:

"The Roman Catholic Priest, filled with blasphemy, madness and hatred, standing on the pulpit on Sunday, instead of teaching love and forgiveness, insisted that everyone drive off Hodur's heretics like mad dogs. He instructed that they throw stones if any of the heretics came to them hungry. If they should ask for a glass of water, give them poison. He threatened them with hunger and pestilence. He fell to his knees and with outstretched hands pleaded that God drop a hellish fire and thus exterminate them. In a hoarse voice he cried: 'Leave the Master's Temple — Cursed! Sacrilegious! By your presence you defile these holy walls. The trace of your footsteps should be burned! Leave, all ye who are possessed by the devil. Christ curses you! Away! Away!'" A group of fanatics, crazed by the priest, obediently came together and screamed: "Leave this place, you heretics!"

"The persecuted withstood the fury of malignant stares, threats and sarcasms for a while. Singing a song in honor of Christ, they moved toward the doors. They advanced illuminated with faith, soldiers in the Cause of God, Christ's outcasts from God's Holy Temple. 'Spit at them, kick them; you will not be punished for these deeds, because you are defeating evil. You are doing right in the name of God.' cried the excited priest. The crowd, aroused by the preacher, spat,

kicked and pummelled the group driven from the altar, because they served God from their hearts.

"The outcasts prayed fervently. 'We are coming to You, Master, so that under Your protection, with Your blessed help, we might build a new church where love will reign. The pain and suffering of the oppressor's blows will be offered to God as a sacrifice. Their scorn will not shake our faith, and the flame in our hearts will burn upon the altars as lanterns of love in the name of our Master!' The crowd continued to beat them. The burning of earthly anger, like black smoke, hid from view the sacrifices of the inner Temple of Cain."*

This scene was characteristic of the persecution of Rev. Hodur and his sympathizers.

In a neighboring parish there occurred an incident which the authors thought would ridicule Rev. Hodur and would, at the same time frighten his sympathizers. "The Polish Roman Catholic priest announced that a certain woman was possessed by the devil; that this misfortune took place for the sole purpose of showing the Glory of God and the might of the Roman Catholic Clergy. He announced further, that on Whitsuntide, the Jesuits would preach sermons, and after the High Mass, there would be held, in front of the church, an exorcism of the stricken woman. This publicity brought to the city great masses of people from Scranton, Duryea, Wilkes-Barre, Nanticoke and Plymouth. During the High Mass, a Jesuit preached about the 'Keys of St. Peter. The keys which were given by Jesus to His first Apostle, and who in turn passed them on to his successors in an unbroken chain to Leo XIII. The Pope bestows the power of the keys (absolution) upon the Bishops, who pass them on to the Priests. In this manner the machine functions cleverly to this day.' When the Jesuit finished, the local pastor, swelled with pride, stepped out on the platform in front of the church, and applied the words of the Jesuit to Rev. Hodur and his parish: 'From whom does Hodur have the power of the Keys, since they were taken away from him by Bishops O'Hara and Hoban? Therefore, his absolutions, his Masses and his blessings are not valid. Whoever breaks

away from the Pope, breaks away from God, because the Pope is His successor on earth!

" 'That is not true! That is blasphemy!' interrupted a feminine voice from the crowd. The people became petrified with fright, because the woman, who had protested, was the same one from whom the Jesuit was shortly to banish the devil. 'Do you hear that, devout people' continued the enraged curate, 'Do you hear how the devil is beginning to shield his ally, Hodur, the fallen and excommunicated Priest?' 'Another lie', called out the same woman bravely, 'I am not shielding Rev. Hodur, but shielding truth, which has been trampled by you. You make yourselves gods on earth. You say that God made the Holy Father His successor? Is God ill? Did He die and for that reason can not rule the world and the people Himself? Does He have to establish such successors as the Pope or O'Hara, or Hoban or you Polish extortionists?' She spoke these words in a screaming impassioned voice. She could be heard about two blocks away. The people grew silent and looked towards the nervous woman as if they expected to see something out of the ordinary occur. Two of the Jesuits conferred with the local pastor, and then the latter announced in a shaken voice: 'The words spoken by the unfortunate parishioner are irrefutable evidence that she is in the possession of the devil. Do you admit that a strange spirit has found residence in you?' he turned and questioned the woman, who was supported by an elderly man and a serious, sad, young woman.

'Yes, I admit it'.

'Who is he?'

'He, whom you do not know'.

'Do you want us to chase away the spirit of spite, deceit and infamy?'

'Try it; I give myself to your ritual. Test your power, which was given to you as you claim by the Holy Father. Try!'

"An elderly man and two young ladies led the 'sick' woman onto the platform. The rites began. The Jesuit opened a large book of adjuration. He read the medieval prayers in a mighty voice: 'Exea Satana, ab ea! Exorcizo

te per Deum Vivum, per Deum Verum, per Deum Sanctum, per Deum Omnipotentem! Exea! Exea! Exea!' The woman did not even quiver. He repeated once again, but with the same results. She stood like a statue.

"The priests exchanged glances of apprehension and the host turned to the surprised and mislead throngs of pious men and women and stated: 'Tomorrow we will finish the ceremony.' But the ceremony was never completed."**

*G.F. II-10 (God's Field II-10)

**"33":31-33 (Grand Book, "Thirty Three")

Chapter VII

Victory Of Truth

*"Truth, shoved into the ground 100 times —
will rise up 100 times."* (Proverb)

The conflict between the fanatic Roman Catholics on the one side, and the newly organized National Church on the other side, was gaining momentum with each passing day. There was friction every passing day. The mass meetings, conferences, public debates and lawsuits cannot be described for lack of space.

Rev. Hodur, in addition to his pastoral duties, occupied the office of missionary. He went to neighboring communities to deliver speeches, and to unite his adherents. He sheltered the people from the malice of the spiteful and prejudiced — from the strong, who would injure the weak. Besides, he published, as was previously mentioned, the weekly newspaper "Straz".

He endured fearlessly the wicked attacks of the bribed editors and Roman Catholic Priests; he guarded his Christian principles and he guarded the people and all those, who had tied themselves to him in life and in death. Now mislead Socialists began to attack Rev. Hodur. At first, they looked upon the new movement favorably, because they thought that this movement would give them an access to the souls of the Polish workers. When they found that the National Church had her own ideals and that she would not allow herself to be used as a tool, they began to persecute Rev. Hodur with even greater fury than they did the Polish Roman Catholic Priests.

In the meantime, lively episodes were taking place in the neighboring Polish Roman Catholic parishes. The pastor in Duryea, claimed special attention by visiting, with a revolver in his hands, the homes of his parishioners to collect money for the church. It is not strange, therefore, that the indignation of the people reached the point, where they began to follow the Scranton example and began to organize a free church.*

On the 24th of March 1898, Rev. J. Orłowski, of Duryea, ordered the people gathered in his church for Mass, to pray that the adherents of the National Church might return to the bosom of the Roman Catholic Bishop. But a certain courageous man arose and shouted: "Fellowmen, let us pray that God Have mercy on us and free us from the Roman Bishops, return to us our churches and give us Polish Bishops". The people prayed in accordance with the latter's request. The ideas and deeds of the Roman Catholic Priest aroused the indignation of the people; they seriously contemplated building a free church. Therefore, they invited Rev. Hodur to present his case. In the end, his idea dominated the fear of persecution and excommunication by the Roman church. In a short time there arose a National Church in Duryea.

A National Church was similarly organized in Dickson City. At the head of this church stood the worthy social leader, Mr. Sliwinski, a Justice of the Peace. During an organizational meeting, at which Rev. Hodur spoke, the Roman Catholic Priest broke in with a mob of Rosary devotees and cried: "Whoever believes in the Holy Father, follow me." The move was futile. In the year 1898 there was built a National Church. The first Mass was read by Rev. Klawiter, who was sent for this purpose by Rev. Hodur.

At this time a National Church was founded in Baltimore, Maryland. In Bayonne, N. J. a free church, in existence since 1897, sought the protection of Rev. Hodur after heavy opposition by Roman Catholic bishops and by their own Judases. In the New England States, there already existed churches in Chicopee, Webster, Lowell and Fall River. In Buffalo, Chicago, East Chicago, St. Louis, and Duluth.

there were churches free from the jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic Bishops.

When we recall that Rome ruled over the Polish people for over a thousand years; that its Bishops and Priests were able to convince even the strongest-willed Poles that only through Rome and through her God could their souls be saved, then we can realize how significant in the history of the Polish people was the establishment in America of the Polish National Catholic Church. Against Rome and its teachings there spoke soundly and forcibly not only a priest, watching with pain in his heart, the persecution of his people, but also the religious Polish working class. This activity was truly Polish. It arose from the needs of the Poles in America. It is a symbol of the religious character of the Polish people.

In the first years of agitation for the new church, the new-born critical spirit among the Poles was concentrated upon the abuse of the Roman Catholic Bishops (German and Irish) as well as the Polish Priests, who depended on them; and the need for fighting for the right to organize a free church. It was soon discovered that such a negative outlook alone would not suffice and could not bear lasting fruit. The organization of parish life based on strong religious-national foundations was considered vital.

Rev. Hodur well knew that it was impossible to think immediately about reform in the church among people, who were assailed on all sides by distrust and suspicion. He believed deeply in the need of a Christian Church and despite his profound belief in the spirit of the Christianity of early ages, he had to proceed with caution. Following the example of Christ and His Apostles, he went step by step on the road to the holiest of ideals. He wanted, first of all, to rid the new church of undesirable Roman Catholic practices. The Christian had to be made worthy of his name. The church was to inspire and prepare him for reform and progress.

During this period, there existed in the churches the practice of collecting money before people entered the church.

This was similar to buying a ticket to the theatre. If a poor person did not have money with which to pay his admission, he could not enter the church on Sunday to pray. The system of private confession with cards, for this confession being sold by the Priests around Easter time, served both to control the souls and to control the purses. This was a true prison of the soul. After discussing the matter with the people, Rev. Hodur abolished these "Roman Catholic ideas".

On the 16th of December, 1900 at the principal meeting of the Polish National Catholic Church in Scranton, Pa., he made the following declaration: "Every nation has its treasure given it by God; thus it should always turn its eyes and hearts to this treasure. Such a treasure for us, among other things, is our beautiful Polish language. This language was trampled on by the Roman Catholic Church. A strange, dead language latin is used at the foot of the Altar, when a Polish Priest offers a sacrifice to Eternal God in the name of the Polish people. All great nations bring into their church-rituals their own language, in order to uplift it, enrich it, honor it and bless it. This was true in the case of the Jews, Greeks, Romans, Syrians and Armenians in ancient times; and in our own era the English and Germans acted in this manner. Only we Polish people, who possess the most beautiful language of the Slavonic Race, with such great masters as Slowacki, Mickiewicz, Konopnicka and Sienkiewicz, allowed our Priests to address God in poor, dead Latin. O, what a falling-off and what disregard for the worthiness of a great nation! Therefore, the time has come for us to turn our hearts toward the God-given treasure and to love it with our whole being; it is time that Polish churches forever still the unintelligible Roman tones and in their place, begin the resounding chorus of wonderful and mighty voices singing 'Chwala na wysokosci Bogu (Glory to God in the Highest!'"**

And from this moment on, in his parish, the Polish language became the language of the rituals. In the Roman Catholic Church there was as much stir as in a bee-hive following this move of Rev. Hodur. God's Priest did not pay any at-

tention to the despair of the Roman Catholics, but publicly announced in his newspaper "Straz" that the Christmas Mass, or rather, the Midnight Mass, in the year 1900, would be read, for the first time in the Polish language.

*"33" (Grand Book, "Thirty Three")

**Nowe Drogi (New Roads) by W. Warega.

Chapter VIII

The First Period

The singing of the Holy Mass in the Polish language by Rev. Hodur became an historical event in the annals of the Polish emigrants. The people enthusiastically greeted the innovation and attended the "Polish Mass" (as it was called) in great numbers. Eye-witnesses confirmed the fact that many cried during these services held in the Polish language. But these services were scorned and laughed at by outsiders. The officious Roman Catholic Clergy, wanting to please the Roman Bishops, attempted by means of pamphlets, newspapers and the pulpit, to prove that a Mass sung in the Polish language was not valid. To counter these actions, Rev. Hodur wrote an extended letter to the Polish people in which he affirmed, in a fundamental manner, based on historical facts and incontestible evidence, the reasonableness of his ideas. Rev. Hodur also discovered in a short time that sermons and speeches, even the very best, would not suffice. He knew that speeches and sermons would go in one ear and out the other. Continuous pastoral teaching and activity were necessary; and this work required the aid of well-educated pastors, though in the beginning, there were very few of these. Priests from the Roman Catholic and from Independent Churches, came over to the National Church. Among them there were some good churchmen but there were also those, who came to the National Church only for material gain, and, when they failed betrayed the church. The same held true with many laymen. To remedy the conditions, Rev. Hodur decided that it was necessary to have a constitution, setting forth the lawful duties of the clergy and laity. He also decided it was

necessary to have a school to train young men for the priesthood. Further, it was required that priests, as well as laymen, understand the Laws of God, of the Church and of the State and that these laws be obeyed not only on Sunday, but every-day. For these reasons, in the year 1904, on the 7th, 8th and 9th of September, after conferring with his brethren, he called together the First Synod of the Polish National Catholic Church of America. The Synod was held in Scranton, in the Church auditorium, and was attended by 16 priests and 130 delegates from the parishes and patriotic organizations, supporting the National Church. They came from Scranton, Dickson City (Priceburg), Jessup, Wilkes-Barre, Plymouth, Edwardsville, Duryea, Austin Heights, Shamokin, Nanticoke, all in the state of Pennsylvania; Bayonne, Jersey City, Passaic, and Perth Amboy, in New Jersey; Fall River, Lowell and Webster, in Massachusetts; West Seneca, N.Y., and Chicago, Ill. The Synod formulated a constitution to govern the parishes connected with the Polish National Catholic Church. It decided to use the Polish language in place of Latin in church rituals. It chose a Bishop in the person of Rev. Francis Hodur. Two special holy days were set aside: Poor Shepherd's Day and Brotherly Love Day. A theological Seminary to train young men for the priesthood in the National Church was to be organized.

At the end of the discussions, the First Synod accepted a series of resolutions, of which we quote the first part for lasting remembrance: "We, the spiritual and lay delegates, numbering 146, representing the parishes of the Polish National Catholic Church, and also representing patriotic organizations, do hereby unanimously resolve to endure on the chosen road. Our fight for the rights of the Polish people in the church will not cease. We solemnly condemn as non-Christian, non-Catholic, the claim of the Roman Catholic Church in America to the properties purchased with the savings and through the labor of the people. It is only natural that every church community has the right of possession and the free disposition of property; the right to enjoy the advantages of ownership. Therefore, when the Roman Catholic

Bishops expropriated the churches, schools and cemeteries of the people, they committed an outrage, an outright theft forbidden by the 7th Commandment and contrary to the legal code of civilized states. We also condemn the suppression of our nationality on the part of the Irish and German Bishops. We came to this country, either banished forcibly by the usurping government of our native land, or in pursuit of good fortune and independence; and we will be grateful, and loyal to the United States as our adopted country to our dying day; and if the need should arise, we will willingly give our life and blood in defense of this country, and its social order, based on the equality, freedom and brotherhood of all people.”*

The non-partisan newspaper, “Jutrzenka” (“Dawn”), in its remarks regarding the First Synod of the Polish National Catholic Church, contained the following in its edition of 22nd of September, 1904: “Passing over the less important transactions, we turn to the third point, which in our opinion was the most significant point of the entire Synod. This concerned the selection of the head of the National Church. Unanimously, with immeasurable enthusiasm, the delegates chose Rev. F. Hodur for the responsible and honorable position with the title of Bishop”.

A reporter of the “Scranton Times” wrote the following, concerning the election: “I never in my life saw such enthusiasm. People embraced one another, kissed one another, shouted, the church bells pealed, the chairman was deafened, everyone was radiant as the throngs gathered on the streets around the Convention Hall, carried away with some kind of sincere feelings of joy. Loudly they shouted ‘Hurrah’ and their enthusiasm reached an indescribable point.”

During this auspicious moment for the new Church, the Roman Catholic protagonists resumed their familiar campaign against the National Church. Their aim was to shatter the people’s confidence in their Bishop by asking “what kind of a bishop will he be? Who will Consecrate him?”

Bishop Hodur was selected through the will and by the votes of the Polish people. Therefore, he was not a bishop.

looking for money or selling oil, but rather a bishop of the people. The First Synod in Scranton made it clear that the people already knew their own needs and had surveyed the road which would lead them to their goal — religious freedom! In order to weaken the National Church, the Roman Catholic Priests brought Archbishop Symon from Europe. He travelled to the larger Polish sections in America, orating on behalf of the Irish Bishops and their hirelings, the Polish Priests, and in a brutal and ruthless manner he attacked the idea of the free church.

The Roman Catholic elements succeeded also in stirring up a few of the National priests against the newly-elected bishop and against the accepted laws of the church and thus brought about a certain amount of confusion in the organization. Under these circumstances Bishop-Elect Hodur called together in Scranton, a Special Synod on the 22nd of August, 1906. Eighty delegates, consisting of Clergy and Laiety, attended. Bishop-Elect Hodur presided at the Synod, assisted by Rev. W. Gawrychowski and J. Sliwinski, as Vice Presidents. The Synod revised the statutes accepted by the earlier Synod. They estimated the membership dues required for the building of a school for Priests; they chose a new Grand Council; a Seminary Committee; a committee for unifying the charter of the Polish National parishes; and finally, advised the Priests to introduce the Polish liturgy in their parishes as quickly as possible.

After this Special Synod, the expansion of the Polish National Church became greater every day. More and more parishes were springing up. But there was still a lack of priests. In order to assure the fullest growth of the church and a necessary condition of this being the power to ordain Priests, Bishop-Elect Hodur decided to obtain the Bishopric. Questions of Holy Orders and consecration had to be decided in such a manner that no one could doubt their authenticity. Consequently, Father Hodur consulted the See of Utrecht, Holland. The See of Utrecht had come into existence in the year 1724, when, in spite of the opposition of the Pope, Rev. Cornelius Van Steenhoven was selected to become Bishop of

the Utrecht Diocese, and was consecrated by a Roman Catholic Bishop, Rev. Don Marie Varlet, a missionary, temporarily staying in Rotterdam. The Pope did not recognize this consecration and excommunicated the newly-organized church of Holland, but the Dutch did not forsake their cause. They reacted to the excommunication of the Pope with dignity; maintaining that the Dutch Catholic Church, organized by St. Willibord in the year 695 in Utrecht, always enjoyed freedom. The Bishops were chosen by the priests and not by Popes or kings. For that reason, therefore, the selection of Bishop Van Steenhoven and his successors was founded on the holy traditions of the ancient church of Holland, and the Roman Catholic bishops had no right to take away this freedom from the people.

Having been duly elected by the council of congregations and Priests on September 29, 1907, Bishop-Elect Hodur received his consecration at the hands of Archbishop Gerard Gul of Utrecht, Holland, Bishop John James Van Thiel of Haarlem, Holland, and Bishop Nicholas Bartholomew Peter Spit of Davenport in St. Gertrude Cathedral, Utrecht, Holland. The consecration was witnessed by a large number of Dutch Priests and also by members of the Dutch government. From the evidence of the Document of Consecration (listed on this page in Latin)** the Dutch Bishops of the Old Catholic Church believed it suitable to continue the use of the title "Polish National Catholic Church" which had been accepted by the United free Polish churches in America, first at the Synod in Scranton in 1904 and then confirmed by all future Synods in America and Poland.

Of course the Roman Catholic Church protested against the name and in those places where they had authority, they did not allow the use of the complete name, but rather forced the leader of the National Church to accept irrelevant names. Bishop Hodur and his followers, laymen as well as clergymen, guarded this name, because it served to quench the age-old thirst of the Polish people for physical and spiritual freedom.

*G.F. (Yr. XX. Nr. 20-44) God's Field.

Dokument Konsekracji Pierwszego Biskupa

Instrumentum consecrationis Reverendissimi Domini FRANCISCI HODUR in Episcopum.

In nomine sanctissimæ et individue Trinitatis, Amen.

Anno Domini MDCCCXVII, Archi-Episcopatus sui decimo quinto, Dominica XIX post Pentecosten, die XXIX mensis Septembris, Illustrissimus et Reverendissimus Dominus GERARDUS GUL, Archi-Episcopus Ultrajectensis, TRAJECTI AD RIENUM in Ecclesia parochiali Sanctæ GERTRUDI dedicata, intra Missarum solemniam in Episcopum regionarium Ecclesiæ Poloniæ Nationalis Catholicæ in Foederatis Statibus Americæ Septentrionalis, Reverendissimum Dominum FRANCISCUM HODUR, Pastorem SCRANTONIIS, in Synodo dictæ Ecclesiæ in Episcopum electum, juxta ritum a Pontificali Romano præscriptum, ordinavit et consecravit, assistantibus Illustrissimis Dominis:

JACOBO JOHANNES van THIEL, Theologiæ Doctore, Episcopo Harlemensi, et NICOLAO BARTHOLOMEO PETRO SPIT, Episcopo Darentriensi.

Electionis tabula prædicti Reverendissimi Domini FRANCISCI HODUR in Episcopum intelligibiliter et distincte ante consecrationis solemnitatem in Ecclesia lectæ fuerunt.

Acta sunt hæc in præfato loco, anno, mense ac die supra dictis, præsentibus ibidem testibus infra signatis:

Gerardus Gul Archiepiscopus Ultraject.
Jacobus Johannes van Thiel Episcopus Harlemensis.
Nicolaus Bartholomeus Petrus Spit, Episcopus Darentriensis.
Petrus Michail Hinkel Pastor Ecclesiæ ad S. Mariam.
Barend Looze pastor Ecclesiæ ad S. Gertrudem.
Cheelder. pastor ad S. Gertrudem.

H. B. Kerkhof

H. Th. A. Verhoef

H. Th. A. Verhoef

H. Th. A. Verhoef

H. Th. A. Verhoef

H. Th. A. Verhoef

H. Th. A. Verhoef

H. Th. A. Verhoef

H. Th. A. Verhoef

H. Th. A. Verhoef

H. Th. A. Verhoef

H. Th. A. Verhoef

H. Th. A. Verhoef

H. Th. A. Verhoef

Et omnia hæc ita peracta fuisse et supra scriptas signaturas genuinas esse eorum, quorum sunt nomina, quique in præsentia mea signaverunt et plures alias omnis conditionis personas huic consecrationi interfuisse attestor. Quorum ut certa sit ac testata fides, manu mea propria subsignavi et sigillo munivi.

Seminarii præses,
F. van Santen.
Secretarius ad hoc.

Chapter IX

The Birth of "Spojnia" — An Organization of Brotherly Assistance

At the time that the Polish National Church was being organized, there was in existence in America an organization of brotherly assistance called "Zwiazek Polsko Narodowy" (Polish National Alliance). Due to the fact that the "Zwiazek" was the only Polish organization of its kind, the National Church members were joining in large groups, inasmuch as every Pole, regardless of his political, social or religious beliefs, was accepted into the organization. This liberal policy became a source of conflict between the Roman Priests and the "Zwiazek". It is a well-known fact that often a priest would not allow the body of a deceased parishioner, wearing the emblem of the "Zwiazek" to be carried into the church. It was often necessary to tear down the fence at the cemetery, because the priest had ordered the cemetery gates to be locked. However, slowly the times changed. Little by little, the heads of the "Zwiazek" began to cater to the Roman priests. It is not strange, therefore, that it was necessary for them to become closely associated with the Roman Catholic Clergy and to support their interests. The members of the Polish National Church could not follow along these lines. The Constitution of the "Zwiazek" guaranteed its members freedom to worship as they pleased, but in reality, it was not so. Therefore, it was necessary for them to choose, either to disregard their church, or to leave the organization and engage in religious and social work befitting the honor and integrity of the hard-working Pole.

When in the year 1908, the members of the Polish National Church, who had been injured by the new rulings, presented their case to the heads of the "Zwiazek" and sought protection, they were ignored. Having no other choice, they decided to start an organization of their own. In August, 1908, Bishop Francis Hodur founded an organization of brotherly assistance under the name of "Spojnia" (Polish National Union), which received its charter in December of the same year. The organizer instilled the spirit of God into this organization, and at the very beginning of its constitution, we read his profound words: "The Polish National Union is not only to be a life insurance company or a financial organization, paying out money in case of death, but it is to be, rather, an organization of ideals. Were we the richest people in the world materially, if we did not possess a strong spirit, conviction in the responsibility for our deeds before God, our own conscience and before our community; and if our faith did not awaken us to social equality, the realization of individual and national worthiness, we would come to a pitiful end, just as so many organizations, which did away with higher ideals, have done. The teachings of Christ should not be used to disguise the mighty, when they enrich themselves and rule over great masses of people, through the medium of religion. His teachings shall give strength, the power to regenerate our nation spiritually as well as morally, to guide it towards great and noble deeds, and to lead it to a state of perfection, which Jesus Christ called the rule of the Kingdom of God on Earth." (Constitution of "Spojnia".)

Work, love, brotherhood and justice became the fundamentals of Spojnia and united all the members. In the following year, the first Sejm of Spojnia was held in Scranton. A large number of delegates, representing 29 branches, organized in the course of one year, despite the crazed attacks and antics of the Roman Catholic elements, took part. Within three months of the first Sejm the organization transferred its offices to the "Straz" building.

In a short time, there arose the need of calling a second Sejm. It was held in Bayonne, N.J. This Sejm really

frightened the Roman Catholic Camp. The foes of the Polish National Church believed very strongly that Spojnia had not the slightest possibility of survival. In fact they were even convinced that not only would the organization itself collapse, but by ruining the Polish worker financially, it would precipitate the collapse of the Polish National Church. It is not strange, therefore, that the proclamation calling together the second Sejm, was a crushing blow to the enemies of the Spojnia. Polish Roman Catholic Priests from New York advised how the progress of Spojnia could be curtailed. Finally they accepted the following proposals of Rev. C. of Passaic, N. J.: (1) To warn that anyone who participated in the Sejm would not be given absolution. (2) To argue that Spojnia was an unreliable organization, whose ultimate goal was social, political and religious downfall. (3) To publish and distribute at the Sejm a pamphlet, which would be slanderous to Bishop Hodur and his faithful Priests. (4) To warn the foreign-born in Bayonne and vicinity, regarding the decline of Spojnia and the National Church. These machinations on the part of the Roman Catholic Clergy did not, in any way, injure Spojnia as an organization, nor trouble the discussions of the Sejm.

Bishop Hodur, as the founder and pioneer of Spojnia, must have had an unusual capacity to survive opposition, because not only were his enemies waiting on all sides for the collapse of the young organization, but very often he could not depend on the untrained people he had to work with. He started a school to re-educate them for their new work and in their new faith, so that they could withstand temporary setbacks. He had to be alert at all times and confident, that Spojnia was not being neglected. This task was even greater, because there were still clergymen and laymen, who did not understand the far-reaching importance of Spojnia, not only for the National Church, but for all Polish people, in general. Therefore, it was necessary for the founder, as a true and valiant leader, to protect it against the attacks of its enemies, above all. Next, to win for the infant organization the recognition of the hard-working Polish people.

In a short time, the Spojnia had a membership totaling thousands. A significant fact was, that the people, who assumed leadership in the organization, had been students in the school of Bishop Hodur. This school was tedious and difficult, because its organizer realized the great importance of shaping social workers in conformity to the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He demanded absolute devotion to and complete sacrifice for a just cause. Thus, he trained not only efficient and honest officers, but also zealous and energetic leaders, who travelled through the neighboring towns and awakened a religious and patriotic spirit in the Polish immigrants. They advanced the torch of learning and knowledge.

With the passing of time, the expansion of Spojnia, under the watchful eye of its organizer, astonished not only its own members, but even outsiders began to consider it a successful and dependable organization. After 20 years, its members increased to 20,000. It had more than 150 branches and possessed assets of \$1,000,000. The sum of \$42,000.00 had been invested in a building and printing presses.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the organizer stressed the need for social and humanitarian work. At the expense of the Spojnia, there were printed and published a large number of pamphlets: religious, social and literary. In addition an "Uczelnia Ludowa" (an evening school) was organized, which diffused knowledge through numerous lectures. Classes were held evenings, during nine months of the year. The director and chief lecturer was Bishop Francis Hodur. He was assisted by men, whom he himself selected, and who were well versed in social affairs. Through his initiative, also, the organization decided to offer scholarships to those young people, who could not afford a higher education. Furthermore, they gave financial assistance to the striking miners, who were very poor and needy.

The foundation, set by the hand of its founder, became immovable. The words, which came from the lips of Bishop Hodur at the beginning of his fruitful work, have today become not just written words in the constitution of the Spojnia, but rather, actual and living in the hearts and deeds of its

workers: "Szerzyć przyjaźń, jedność i prawdziwą miłość Chrześcijańską wśród członków organizacji w której niebyłby tamowany rozwój sił narodu."*

Today, no one asks, why Bishop Hodur organized the Spojnia or how it was organized. In this instance, he can well repeat the words of a famous Polish military leader, Stefan Czarnecki, who on his deathbed said: "Jam nie z roli ani z soli, ale z tego, co mnie boli, wyrosłem." The wrongs suffered by the Polish workers pained the founder very much, and from this pain there was born the great organization known as "Spojnia".

*"To spread friendship, unity and genuine Christian living among the members of an organization in which the unfolding of the strength of a people would not be impeded."

**Today Spojnia has a membership of over 30,000 and its assets are over \$6,000,000.00.

Chapter X

The Second Period

The Bishopric was bestowed upon Rev. Hodur, because the Polish National Church was constantly expanding. The number of parishes increased to an extent that made it necessary to have a strong administration with Priests, who had been educated and ordained in the National Church. Steadily-increasing numbers of priests from independent churches, as well as from the Roman Catholic Church, sought the jurisdiction of the new bishop. At the same time, the founder of the National Church was carrying on a revived contest in the Straz with the malcontents who continued to belittle everyone and everything in any way connected with the name of Bishop Hodur.

The lovers of right, happily greeted the modest newspaper, which heralded a new spring of spiritual and religious flowering in place of the gray life which had gone before. The Roman Catholic Priests strictly forbade the reading of the "Straz" and fought it in their pulpits. They stirred up the ignorant masses to such an extent that they began to show their hatred in very curious and absurd ways: some placed the paper on a rock and then beat it with a hammer; others would cut up the paper with a knife; and still others, would tear up the paper in small pieces and throw them into the fire. In spite of all this, very slowly, thanks to the unbeatable and vigilant work of Bishop Hodur, and good Priests and laymen, the "Straz" became an important paper.

In the year 1909, Bishop Hodur called a second Synod in the city of Scranton. This Synod declared that preaching of and listening to the word of God, is a Sacrament, and that the

preaching of the Gospel is the sacred duty of a Polish National Priest. This Synod, also set aside the second Sunday of March, each year, as a church holiday, commemorating the founding of the Polish National Catholic Church.

After the Synod, Bishop Hodur immediately began to widen the sphere of his activities. Besides his work as a spiritual leader in the Scranton parish, he was an editor, a professor in the Theological Seminary, and an author; he travelled to various cities in different states, central as well as eastern, proclaiming new ideas, and the new truths of spiritual and social rebirth. He organized, strengthened and united those who had broken away from the Roman Catholic Church and, who could very easily have been lost in the changes and chaos of the times, unless they were given a definite goal. The most important task facing the organizer of the Polish National Church in America, was to get as far away as possible from that "greatest" of organizations — Rome; to free the people from under its influence; to enable them to become free Christian people, who could set in order their relations with The Creator and their fellow-men, and with the country in which they lived, in the spirit of the teachings of Jesus Christ. With these thoughts in mind, he sat down at his desk in the month of March, 1912, and wrote the following words:

THROUGH THE YEARS TO THEE O LORD!

(Tyle Lat My Ci O Panie!)

Through the years to Thee, O Lord,
Faithfully Thy Call we served,
At the break of dawn, marched onward,
Bonds of slavery, we have severed.
To Thee we built a Temple,
Which to us became a treasure,
From which comes our faith and courage,
Which will give us Hope forever.
Christ now preaches from the altar,
As he preached before the dawning,
Truth that no man can alter,

Since the great day of His coming.
 Once again He comes from Heaven,
 To the people of the soil,
 In the form of Truth that's given
 To His children, souls of toil.
 In the hour of our need,
 We are lifted out of sin.
 New life poured into our deeds,
 Waking sleeping souls of men.
 Pours new life into our souls,
 Kindled by His Sacred Fires,
 With compassion He us molds,
 As a tempered sword required.
 Through the storms of life He guides us.
 In the darkness of the night,
 Christ Leads onward and inspires us
 Love we Him with all our might.
 Would to God, we could be faithful,
 Would to God, this Sacred Banner
 To our last breath keep us grateful
 Souls unfurled in heart-like manner.

*(Composed by Prime Bishop Francis Hodur —
 Trans. by Stanley Janus)*

In a short time, the beautiful and profound words of this song, became the hymn of the Polish National Church.

In the year of 1914, Bishop Hodur began to organize the male youth of the church in a society which he called "Zmartwychwstanie" (Resurrection). His concern was that young men who did not have much education or had no occupation, might become dull in mind and body from inactivity and corrupted by their associates. He desired to bring them together in a society which would build a healthy-minded person; one who was sober and who knew how to live for himself and for his fellowman. One, who could be depended upon to defend a just, honorable and reverent cause. The aim of this organization was the spreading of knowledge and the encouragement of patriotic works by presenting programs in honor of na-

tional heroes. The educational program included the organization of dramatics and athletics. The society grew slowly in respect to membership and branches. Gradually other parishes of the National Church began to follow suit.

In this year was held in Chicago, Ill., the third General Synod of the National Church. From the rapid development of the Polish National Church through the organization of new parishes, arose the need to elect new bishops to aid Bishop Hodur. The Synod in Chicago elected Rev. Walenty Gawrychowski, Rev. Francis Bonczak, Rev. Walenty Cichy, and Rev. J. Plaga as bishops and as assistants to Bishop Hodur. The two latter priests shortly renounced the elevated station. A Liturgical Book Commission headed by Bishop Hodur was formed. In conclusion, the Synod accepted the Creed of the Polish National Church, arranged, illustrated and formulated by Bishop Hodur; this Creed had already been accepted at the Provincial Synod at Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

In the meantime, opportunity to organize new parishes in the vicinity of Scranton arose. In 1916 in the town of Dupont, Pa., there was a misunderstanding between the Roman Catholic Bishop of Scranton, the parish priest, and the people. A short time later on January 16th a Sheriff from Wilkes-Barre arrived with his deputies and the police and with a Roman Catholic Priest. The police stormed the gates and began to disperse the throng. Suddenly a shot was heard and then W. Guzior fell to the ground mortally wounded (he died a short time later at the hospital). With this bloodshed, began a fierce battle in which more than 80 people were wounded. Following the bloody conflict in Dupont, everyone condemned the people, who were simply fighting for their rights. Bishop Hodur, alone, in the "Straz", defended them, and gave them sound and sensible advice. He urged them to break away from the Roman Catholic prison and to organize a free Polish National parish. Not only did he give advice, but upon his initiative, the National Church sent material aid to the wronged people in Dupont. One month later, at a public meeting in Dupont, Bishop Hodur explained the principles of the Polish National Church and those present decided,

by a large majority of votes, to break relations with the Roman Catholic Bishop and join the National Church. On Palm Sunday of that year, Bishop Hodur, assisted by Priests from that vicinity, celebrated solemn Vespers before 5,000 people assembled in front of the church, because the structure was too small to hold them.

Not only dissatisfied Poles, but also Hungarians, Slovaks, Italians, and Lithuanians gathered under the protective wing of Bishop Hodur. When a quarrel arose in the Lithuanian Roman Catholic Church in Scranton, caused by the fact that the people requested the removal of a detested Priest, who had signed over the property of the people to a Roman Catholic Bishop, the case was taken to court. The people won four decisions in the higher State Courts. In the end, however, they lost the suit. This was reason enough to organize an independent Lithuanian National Church under the close supervision of Bishop Hodur. The Lithuanian people had great faith in the leader of the Polish National Church, who helped them spiritually and materially. The ideals of a free church strengthened the Lithuanian brethren, to such an extent, that they were able to survive the sad times of Roman Catholic persecution and they began a new life in an independent church.

In the year 1915, after an investigation into the fraudulent sale of the National Church in Buffalo to the Roman Catholics, Bishop Hodur advised Rev. W. Gawrychowski to earnestly attempt to regain the lost church. Thanks to the exertions of Bishop Hodur and the valiant priest, the Buffalo parish was reclaimed legally. In later years, it became a Cathedral and the seat of the National Catholic Bishop in the Buffalo-Pittsburgh Diocese.

During these difficulties, Bishop Hodur did not neglect his social and patriotic work. Under his leadership, the Polish National Church of America and affiliated organizations, took part in the conventions held by the Polish people in America, with the aim of giving moral and material aid to the suffering Poles in Europe. At one of these conventions, held in Chicago, Ill., Bishop Hodur opposed the delegates of

the Roman Catholic Church, who refused to allow the representatives of the National Church to become permanent members of the organization K.O.N.* The National Church was victorious in the dispute, and then the Roman Catholic Bishop from Milwaukee, together with the Roman Catholic Delegates, left the convention hall. Nor was Bishop Hodur's love and patriotism for his adopted country less than for his native land. In 1916, when it was uncertain, whether the United States would remain neutral in face of the world conflict, he called together his fellow countrymen to manifest their readiness to serve the United States. This was a reassuring demonstration of loyalty to the land which had become a haven for the Polish people — their adopted country, which gave them political and religious freedom, together with the opportunity to better themselves spiritually, morally and economically.

*Komitet Obrony Narodowej (Committee of National Defense).

Chapter XI

The Thorny Road Through Poland

From the moment that the Polish National Church was organized in America, Bishop Hodur's dream was to carry the ideal of the free church to Poland. Anyone who knows the history of Poland, will understand that, as long as Czarist Russia, Germany and Austria held Poland in captivity, the dreams of Bishop Hodur could not be fulfilled. Back in 1907, while Bishop Hodur was staying in Holland, he participated in a congress, consisting of Old Catholic Bishops, Priests and laity. During a session of the congress, his name was called and the name of the church he represented, was mentioned. General Kiryjew, who represented the Orthodox Church, became aroused at this and jumped to his feet, crying: "Polish National Church! Now what kind of a new church is that? Why necessarily 'National'? But then it is true, that you Poles have to be different from all the rest of the world. With you, everything is 'National' . . . 'wsio narodowe . . . National religion?'"

"There is no National Religion yet," replied Bishop Hodur, "But there will be some day, when the Polish people awaken from their lethargy, throw off the Roman Catholic yoke, and introduce the National Church . . ."

"Czarist Russia would never recognize such a church", answered Kiryjew.

"I know very well, that Czarist Russia would never recognize the Polish National Church, but I dream and constantly pray, that, when Poland is resurrected, she will accept with open arms the Polish National Church — that creation of the Polish spirit and the Polish heart; this Polish revelation, sent

down from the heavens to strengthen, comfort and save the poor worker, scattered throughout America.”*

Twenty years later, the people overthrew the Czar, the Kaiser, the Emperor and similar oppressors, and brought into existence a free Poland.

Following the suggestion of Bishop Hodur, Rev. Bronislaw Krupski sailed for Poland in 1919, as the first missionary of the National Church. However, at the very beginning, he encountered many obstacles and hardships. To fight the National Church, the Roman Catholic clergy gathered all the strength they possessed. They stopped at nothing; if the means used, were effective, they were justified. Frightful religious fanaticism, even on the part of the people, was the chief obstacle to the extension of the idea of the National Church. In 1920, having more time to himself, Bishop Hodur sailed for Poland for a few weeks to investigate personally the conditions there. Upon his return, he called together his brethren and told them to prepare themselves for a mission to work and struggle for the church of Christ, that they might be full of faith, strength, and fortitude; that they be examples of Christian living.

He then organized committees to collect contributions for the people, made destitute by the World War. He trained the missionaries in the ideas of the National Church. He did everything in his power to gain equal rights for the worshippers of the National Church, in conformity with the Polish Constitution of 1921, guaranteeing freedom of conscience to all citizens. However, the Roman Catholic Clergy had an even stronger influence over the state, than the constitution of the country. Thus, there began for the members of the National Church an era of oppression, reminiscent of the times of Nero and Deoclesian and the Spanish Inquisition of the 16th Century. Rev. Francis Bonczak (Bishop Elect) a young, energetic, highly intelligent and warm-hearted (now Bishop in Milwaukee, Wisc.) was appointed head of the missionaries from America. He passed through a Golgotha of oppression and suffering, too terrible to describe.

The Roman Catholic Clergy did not try to conquer him

with arguments in theology, philosophy and history, but they sent armed men and police, who cunningly broke up the gatherings of worshippers, forbade readings, meetings and Masses. They drove them away as if they were bandits. They tore off liturgical robes of the missionaries on the streets and cried: "It's a disgrace! It's a disgrace!" The Roman Catholic Clergy of Poland, in 1923, reached such a state of apprehension that, when Bishop Hodur visited the members of the National Church and prepared to sing the Holy Mass in the Polish language in Debnik, the police forbade the service. In view of this, Bishop Hodur asked the people to say the "Our Father". However, the head of the police told them that even this was not permissible . . .

The National Church progressed steadily toward her missionary goal. No attention was paid to the criticisms and reproaches advanced by the Roman Catholic papers contending, that the National Church was an importation from America, supported by the Masons and Jews.

In 1925, Bishop Leon Grochowski, a zealous missionary sailed for Poland. He visited all the National parishes and held Masses. His sermons strengthened and fortified the new movement and awakened a new confidence in men to persevere in the struggle for God's Truth and Justice for all mankind. However, the oppression of the members of the National Church continued. Public Massacres occurred in some places, the police, at the instigation of the Roman Catholic Bishops, wounded many members of the National Church with carbines and bayonets.

The extent of Roman Catholic intolerance was apparent in 1926, when Bishop Hodur visited in Warsaw. During the service celebrated together with Bishop F. Bonczak, a large group of Roman Catholics broke in. This band, made up of fanatic students, threw themselves at the Nationals and began to beat them with clubs and chairs. Some of the malefactors jumped to the stage intending to murder both bishops of the National Church. Bishop Bonczak's head was split open with a chair. Then they assaulted Bishop Hodur, shielded by the faithful people, though the Roman Catholic club-bearers were

beating everyone unmercifully. Before the police arrived, the place in which the service was being held, was wholly demolished and scores were wounded. Several criminals were nabbed and confessed, that in accordance with instructions from the Roman Catholic Priest, they were to murder these valiant fighters for spiritual freedom.

Bishop Hodur did not lose hope. His well-known traits of strength and courage stood out, his faith unflinching. A few minutes after his wounds had been washed and dressed, he spoke the following words to the newspapermen who surrounded him: "I now feel fifty percent stronger than I did before, because I feel that the personal injuries I received, will benefit the National Church." The Roman Catholic Church in Poland gave a sad demonstration of its maturity by planning to murder a man, who had devoted himself to the Polish people all his life; a man, who was full of superhuman strength for work and sacrifice. This display of Roman Catholic intolerance reverberated with loud echoes in the American Press. When hundreds of thousands of Bishop Hodur's friends, throughout the entire United States, learned that he, who had managed to organize 150,000 Poles in this country, was still alive, they breathed a vast sigh of relief. Even his foes expressed their surprise, when within a few days of the attack upon him, Bishop Hodur continued his missionary tour, pointing out to the Polish people the spiritual freedom and liberating principles of the National Church.

Bishop Hodur, his clergymen and laymen did not travel for the sole purpose of propagating the idea of the National Church by means of sermons and pamphlets. They wanted to associate themselves with other organizations, working to spread knowledge and to bring spiritual solace to unfortunate brothers held in prison-like fastness by the Roman Catholic Clergy, for nearly 1,000 years. On the one hand, the National Church gave the people a gospel of spiritual freedom with principles of life, drawn from Christ's Revelation, calling for honest, creative work in fields of learning, management, and civic life. On the other hand, it frightened those, who exploited the people, and at the expense of their ignorance,

sought power over them. The name of Bishop Hodur, and his National Church restrained the Roman Catholic clergy from greater abuse of the people. In 1925, when the Polish Government was negotiating a concordat with the Vatican, the former used the threat of promoting the National Church in Poland to gain concessions from the latter. Therefore, if the National Church had not come into existence, the old adage would loudly be repeated: "Vae victis" "Woe to the conquered — Woe to the poor and weak in the church!"

*From Bishop Hodur's writings.

Chapter XII

The Third Period

At this time, Bishop Hodur widened the scope of his work in the humanitarian, social and patriotic field. The United States was engaged in the first World War, and it was, therefore, necessary for him to use his authority to induce his followers to put forth their best efforts in every respect in order to help the U.S. Government bring about a victorious conclusion of the war. It is a well-known fact that the Poles were not lacking in patriotism and love for their adopted country. This fact is confirmed by the numerous casualties of Polish origin during the war. Bishop Hodur was very anxious that his people repay their debt of gratitude to the country which had given them an opportunity for an expanding spiritual and social life. He asked the people to buy as many Liberty Bonds as they possibly could. The National Church's organizations faithfully and whole-heartedly cooperated with the U.S. Government. The Bishop also remembered Poland in his humanitarian work. At that time, the hunger-stricken people of Poland were begging for assistance. Bishop Hodur did not waver even for a minute. He did not speculate about who was to send help, instead, he sought donations from the National Church and "Spojnia", without delay. Relief for Poland was channeled through the central committee of assistance, controlled by clerical and non-democratic elements who had no affection for the National Church or her leaders, particularly Bishop Hodur. Nevertheless this self-sacrificing clergyman did not hesitate to place the contribution of his church before this committee. After the war, when it became possible to get in direct contact with the needy people in Po-

land (about whom the heads of Central Committee had forgotten), he, together with his organizations, independently sent material aid.

In order to help rebuild Poland, devastated by 150 years of foreign domination and the five-year world war, Bishop Hodur suggested that a general Sejm of all organizations, made up of Polish immigrants in America, be called. When this was done, he himself took part in the sessions and at the last one, which was held in Buffalo, N.Y., he made the following motion: "We, the representatives of the Polish immigrants in America, do hereby decide to donate to Poland 20 million dollars (this sum was to be guaranteed by the assets of all Polish organizations held by American banks) to help strengthen her, so that she can more easily enter on the road to economic revival." The motion was unanimously carried. When Bishop Hodur left the hall, he was given a tremendous ovation, even by the Roman Catholics. At his hotel, he wrote articles to the daily newspapers, adjuring the Roman Catholic Clergy not to back out and to execute the adopted resolution. Alas, the Polish Roman Catholic clergy secretly killed the resolution and it was never carried out. The war period was for Bishop Hodur an interval of unremitting sacrifice for the United States, on the one hand, and for Poland, on the other.

In spite of the turmoil of war, this revered pastor kept a watchful eye on the progress of religion. He visited the Polish communities and inspired those who had faltered, to a new religious life. He helped those who had grievances. The efforts of Bishop Hodur brought about sound and blessed fruit. New parishes of the National Church arose, not because of incidental differences between the people and their priest, but because of the fact that the progressive Poles in America were not satisfied with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, and its entire system of salvation. Noble and creative activities stem from the demand for justice and truth. For these reasons, at the beginning of this period, new parishes of the National Church were forming in the following cities: Philadelphia, Canonsburg, New Castle, Carnegie, Boswell, Johnstown, McKeesrocks, Slovan, Oil City, Erie and South

Fork, Penna.; Albany, and Niagara Falls, N.Y.; Trenton, N.J.; Wallingford, Conn., Westfield, Mass., Foley, Minn., Cleveland, Ohio and Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Because of the war and its aftermath, Bishop Hodur called to Scranton the 4th Synod of the National Church in June, 1921. One hundred and sixty two representatives of the clergy and laity attended. At the opening of the Synod, Bishop Hodur delivered a speech of profound meaning, from which we have quoted a few excerpts below.*

The fourth General Synod made the following decisions: (1) That public confession is a binding form of the Sacrament of Penance in the National Church for the adult members of the church, with the retention of private confessions for anyone who desired them, and obligatory for the children of the church. (2) That Baptism and Confirmation are actually one Sacrament in dual form. (3) It defined the concept of "Hell"; (4) It lifted the ban upon the clergy marrying; and (5) It recognized as the hymn of the Polish National Church, the religious song composed by Bishop Hodur, beginning with the words "Tyle Lat my Ci o Panie!" (Through the Years to Thee o Lord.)

Bishop Hodur attempted with all his might to incorporate into the life of the National parishes the decisions and resolutions of the Fourth Synod which had been held in Scranton. However, he and his followers met some opposition, not from the people, because they were very much attached to their leader and willingly cooperated, but from the "Lekkie Duchy", "niezalezni Ksieza", independent Priests. These had been thrown out of the Roman Catholic Church and disregarded by Bishop Hodur; or else driven out by the people themselves. They became very troublesome. Without faith, without honor and without character, they looked for the quickest way to get rich and to elevate themselves at the expense of the hard-working people. They travelled to different Polish communities and slandered Bishop Hodur in a singular manner. They published villainous pamphlets, and exploited the naivete and ignorance of the confused. It was amusing to see these independents nominate themselves "Prelates",

"Bishops" and "Archbishops". They dressed in pompous liturgical robes, purchased with the money of those they had deceived. Some of them offered to sell soil from the "Grave of Christ", wood from the "Cross of Christ" and "Miraculous pictures" painted by foreign painters, and even feathers, taken from the wings of the "Archangels". Bishop Hodur drove these priests away. He branded them as frauds in his newspapers, and warned the people against them. It is not strange, therefore, that they violently attacked the National Church and Bishop Hodur. They caused a great deal of damage to the National Church and Bishop Hodur, by their non-Christian life and deeds. A vital weapon in the struggle against those, who were cheating and injuring the people, and in the propagation of true Christian teachings, was the magazine "Rola Boza" (God's Field), an organ of the National Church, it was founded by Bishop Hodur in 1923. In a short time, this magazine became one of the most important religious publications of the Polish Press in America, Poland and Canada.

At this time, Bishop Hodur decided that in a living institution like the National Church, whose vitality was rich in the creation of new organizational cells, to achieve the close unity with the head and the heart, the entire organism must be preserved. It would be necessary to divide the National Churches into territorial sections in America and in Poland; and to elect able leaders from among the Clergy of the National Church to take charge of these sections. With this fact in mind, after conferring with the Grand Council of the Church, he called a Special Synod of the Polish National Catholic Church to Scranton in July, 1924. In this Synod, there were 122 delegates from America, Poland and Canada. Among other things, this Synod discussed the Mission of the Polish National Church in Poland; recognized the magazine "Rola Boza" as an organ of the church; and elected as bishops: Rev. Leon Grochowski and Rev. John Gritenas. A date was appointed for their consecration and also for the consecration of Rev. W. Gawrychowski and Rev. F. Bonczak, who had been elected at the Synod in Chicago, Ill., in 1914. The

National Church in America, was to be divided into three dioceses: eastern, central and western. There was to be a separate diocese for Lithuanian National Church. Bishop-Elect F. Bonczak was assigned to Poland. Bishop Hodur became head of the entire church, with the title of "Prime" Bishop. The election of the Bishops was unanimous and in keeping with the democratic spirit of the Christian Church of the early ages. On the 17th of August of the same year, the new Bishops were consecrated at the Polish National Parish of St. Stanislaus B. & M. The consecration was witnessed by large numbers of Priests and great masses of people. Prime Bishop F. Hodur, became the head of the Central Diocese. Bishop L. Grochowski took charge of the Western Diocese; Bishop W. Gawrychowski took leadership of the Eastern Diocese; Bishop J. Gritenas became Bishop of the Lithuanian Diocese; and Bishop F. Bonczak took charge of the Mission in Poland.

When the Roman Catholic Camp learned this, it renewed its attacks in the press, declaring that "in the face of God and the Church, this deed of Rev. F. Hodur is frightfully sacrilegious" (*Przewodnik Katolicki*, No. 36, 1926). According to it, Pope Boniface VIII in the year 1302, in the Encyclical: *Unam Sanctam*, stated: "We assert, state and announce, that in order to be saved, it is necessary that every living person be subject to the Pope". In other words every Roman Catholic is a prisoner from birth. But the Roman Catholic Church always produced prisoners, who blindly followed the Pope like the gladiators of the Roman Emperor, who, while going to their deaths, cried: "Ave Caesar, morituri te salutant" ("Caesar, we, who are about to die, salute you). They continued to maintain that they alone had the "patent" for saving souls and that they alone were "important".

In this same year, a Roman Catholic Prelate in Scranton, Rev. Zychowicz, brought a lawsuit against Bishop Hodur. He claimed that the latter had "disgraced his honor" four years before, in 1920, at the time of his renowned three-day dispute with the Roman Catholic Clergy. He pilloried the founder of the National Church in the courts. This was

nothing new, just the second act of the drama, and a continuation of the old, unceasing struggle between the Polish people and the agents of the Pope, since the beginning of the Polish National Church. At the same time that the successors of Ananas and Kaifas were spiritually crucifying Bishop Hodur, a constantly growing number of people were coming under his protective wing. The aggrieved Slovaks from McKeesport sent a delegation of two Slovak Priests (Stephen Tokar and J. Grunt) to plead with Bishop Hodur that he receive their parish under his jurisdiction, bless their church and administer the Sacrament of Confirmation. The delegates revealed that the Slovak parishes in Palmerton, Tarentum, Farrell, Monesson, and Masantown desired to come under the jurisdiction of the National Bishop until such time as they could elect a Bishop of their own. In September, 1925, Bishop Hodur blessed the church in McKeesport, Pa. And in November of the same year, together with the Slovak Priests and 6,000 people, he dedicated the Slovak church of Holy Name of Jesus, in Passaic, N.J., and received the parish under his jurisdiction. During the celebration, thousands of people of Polish, Slovak, Czech, Serbian and Hungarian extraction, exalted by the words of Bishop Hodur, spoken during the celebration, were united in their desire for religious freedom. He fully expressed their thoughts when he said: "We do not want to have anything in common with the Papal church or any of its representatives in America. We have learned that their aim is not the Salvation of the souls of our brethren. Their concern is not for the truth of the Gospel. They do not labor for the progress and happiness of helpless immigrants, but rather to strengthen their authority over them and their posterity. Christ, and not the Pope, is our master and leader. The rules that govern our Church and our lives are based on God's eternal truths and laws, proclaimed by Jesus Christ, and not on the decrees of the Roman Catholic Council."**

It is advisable to add here that in this same period, a group of Italians came to Bishop Hodur. They had organized several parishes of a proposed Italian National Church at the

head of which stood Rev. A. Lanza, from Hackensack, N.J. However, they failed to heed Bishop Hodur's suggestions, because they did not base their religion on Jesus Christ and His Gospel. Many facts were hid from the people. The parish was weak and uncertain of its existence and in a short time ceased to exist. Rev. Lanza, threatened with violence, dynamite and daggers by the dissatisfied people, withdrew. All traces of him completely disappeared.

*"Think not that I came to send peace on earth" (Mat. 10:34) Perhaps more than one of you are astonished that I am welcoming you with such strange words. They are not my words, however, but the words of our Master, Lawgiver and Founder of the Church. The words of the Divine Leader, whom we have become accustomed to look upon as a quiet, modest and peaceful prophet, stepping aside for every adversary, always willing for the aggressor to strike the other cheek, lamenting over the fall of Jerusalem, crying with those who cry and glad with those, who are rejoicing. Such was Christ Jesus, Teacher and Saviour of humanity, not only at some particular moment, or during some particular disposition of the spirit, but at all time. Only the enemies of real Christianity, those, who are always seeking to exploit others: the Popes, Kings, the mighty of this world, wanted, up to this day, to present Christ as a meek, humble, and withdrawing leader, desiring that His followers and disciples be of similar spirit: quiet, humble, awkward, modest, surrendering to fate in everything. Masses of people, so disposed and brought up would allow themselves to be taken advantage of with impunity. Investigating scrupulously, however, Christ's impact upon human history, His teaching, His struggles with superior forces, and finally His tragic death, we arrive at the conclusion that the Divine Master from Nazareth was, despite His mildness and goodness, a man of action, above all. By His life and death, He shook the depths, the very being of the world. He destroyed the old edifices of illusions and fanaticism, and snapped the whip above the heads of priest-quacks and capitalistic racketeers. Therefore, it is not surprising that they resolved to do away with Him. The successors to these religious frauds and political-social cheats are today either degrading Him or trying to falsify His sacred teachings. Christ knew His adversaries, but He did not step aside for them. He knew what to expect from the Pharisees, Sadducees and the Herodians, knew that they hated Him from the very depths of their souls; that they would apply all possible means to do away with Him; that they would persecute His disciples and friends; that because of His teachings, the world would be divided: that a father would despise his children, a brother his

brother, a daughter her mother and one nation another nation. In spite of this, He preached the Gospel, went from city to city until He reached Golgotha...

"We, faithful followers of the Polish National Church, understand this position of Christ and His Spirit perfectly, perhaps better, than the members of any other contemporary Christian church in the world, because we are reliving everything that Christ Jesus had foretold and had lived Himself.

"And we are very glad about the situation and love all the more such a Master-Leader, who not only brings His followers and friends peace and satiety of body and soul, but also a burning desire for truth and spiritual happiness. Desire for activity, suffering and struggle; constant yearning for light and justice for an eternal, active and creative life, this characterizes the sincere follower of Christ.

"In the name of such a Christ, we have established the church in Scranton, in His name we went from Ocean to Ocean, in His name we are knocking at the gates of awakened Poland and in His name, we again have gathered for this Fourth Synod, for counsel, to solidify and ask for cooperation all those, who in a live and active Christianity are seeking help for themselves, their nation and all humanity.

"We, as Priests of the National Church, also as leaders of the laity, should be the salt of the earth, the example of Christian life, collaborators with the people in their great work in the creation of new culture, in this and in the old country, supported by the worth of the past and present. And we will execute that work, if we exert all our strength and remain faithful to God's calling."

**G.F. (God's Field) III-23.

Chapter XIII

The Expansion Period Of The Ideals Of The National Church

In spite of the fact that Bishop Hodur was almost 60 years old and was burdened with endless work, he continued to show inexhaustible energy and spiritual strength. When the miners of the Anthracite Coal Region went out on strike, he was ready to help them. There is an old Polish adage which says: "Prawdziwego przyjaciela poznaje sie w biedzie", which is equal to the American "A friend in need is a friend indeed". Such a true friend to the people, who were fighting for their right to live, was Bishop Hodur. He saw to it that the families of the miners were properly taken care of; he cheered those who were in low spirits; and organized committees to aid the needy, even those outside of the coal region. The financial committee of "Spojnia" was formed to show vigilance, solicitousness and brotherly understanding in the hours of trial and tribulation. It is doubtful whether many people today remember Bishop Hodur in those days, wearing a tattered cassock, due to the fact that he had given every available penny to help the poor miners. Consequently, during the entire period of the strike, which lasted 170 days, not one person of the 4,000 people in St. Stanislaus parish in Scranton, under the jurisdiction of Bishop Hodur, became seriously ill, none tottered nor did any fall. Through solidarity and mutual assistance they endured to the victorious end.

In the meantime, All Saints Parish, one of the largest parishes of the National Church in the western diocese, invited Bishop Hodur to come to Chicago at the beginning of

1926. Here the people asked for the restoration of the bishopric, and the appointment of a clergyman with the title of Bishop. The plea of the people was granted, and a few days later Bishop Hodur, installed as head of the parish of All Saints in Chicago, and as the head of the western diocese, Bishop Leon Grochowski, a fervent apostle of Christian principles. Under Bishop Grochowski, a sincere co-worker of Bishop Hodur, the western diocese of the National Church entered upon a period of magnificent expansion. Numerous parishes arose in various cities of Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Nebraska and Minnesota. In the city of Chicago alone there were 10 parishes; Cleveland, Ohio, 4; Detroit, Mich., 3; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 2. An official weekly newspaper and organ of the western diocese "Przebudzenie" (Awakening) commenced publication. A Theological Seminary was organized and missionaries of the National Church were sent to western and southern states as well as to Canada.

Bishop Hodur, together with suitably chosen co-workers, did much for the expansion of the western and eastern dioceses; the central diocese, under his individual leadership showed an even more magnificent expansion. Through his initiative, the rebuilding of the church of the first Polish National parish in Scranton, Pa., took place at a cost totaling over \$100,000. The dedication of the newly-rebuilt place of worship took place on the 13th of June, 1926. Nearly 10,000 people were gathered, filled with live faith of God's justice and deep love for the cause of their church. Four Bishops and forty Priests were also present at this blessing. The convention documented the great truth that the National Church already is an indestructible force. The Bishop purchased a building which was to be used as a Seminary, and which was opened under the name of Rev. Hieronim Savonarola* for the disposition of the National Church, during that same year.

Bishop Hodur did not forget his missionary work, but carried on with even greater zeal. He gave his assistance freely, wherever the National Church needed his assistance, his ideas and his authority. He continued to travel from city to city, strengthening and fortifying. With the aid of Priests,

who had been educated by him, he organized numerous parishes of the National Church: in Hazleton, Frackville, Middleport, Minersville, Allentown, Bethlehem, Kingston, Reading, Throop, and Homestead in Pennsylvania; and Little Falls and Utica in New York. In a comparatively short time these parishes were doing very well.

The missionary work and the zealous endeavors of Bishop Hodur bore rich fruit. His eminent presence was needed everywhere. The quantity of his tasks barred his presence everywhere. First of all, he had to take care of those places which needed assistance more than the others. At the end of 1926, therefore, he sailed for Poland, for the 10th time, in order to revive the spirits of all those who followed his call, and who suffered severe persecution for the ideals of the National Church. During a service, which he was celebrating in Warsaw, he was attacked by a group of Roman Catholic bullies, and was painfully wounded. This attack failed to frighten God's man in the work which he had begun. Thanks to zealous endeavors and counsels, thanks to the sincere cooperation of the noble Priests, and laity, the National Church here in America, and in Poland, grew in importance and strength.

In April 1928, at the 3rd Special Synod held in Scranton, Bishop Hodur advocated the selection of a new assistant with the title of Bishop for the territory Buffalo-Pittsburgh. The Synod chose the valiant Priest, Rev. John Z. Jasinski, D.D., who in a short time was consecrated bishop, and took charge of the newly-created Buffalo-Pittsburgh Diocese. In June, 1928, Bishop Hodur again sailed for Poland to take part in the first Synod of the National Church held in Warsaw, Poland. At this Synod, he tried very hard to gain legal recognition for the National Church in Poland. Together with his co-workers, he was forced to undergo severe persecution and oppression.

Upon his return to the United States, he suffered a painful blow in the premature death of Bishop John Gritenas, the head of the Lithuanian National Church, a zealous co-worker of Bishop Hodur. Time, bringing work and hardships, par-

tially weakened the aging Bishop. He had to withdraw to the "Spojnia" Farm in Waymart, Pa., for a brief respite. This was only a specious rest, however, because while there, he wrote an extensive book entitled "Apokalipsa XX Wieku". After finishing this work, he returned to Scranton, where, with co-workers, he edited a memorial book entitled "33" which was published in a short time, and became very popular. It contained around 700 printed pages and hundreds of pictures of the life, expansion and progress of the National Church.

He had scarcely finished the editing of this book, when the need for calling the Fifth General Synod in Buffalo, N.Y., in 1931 became apparent. At this Synod, Bishop Hodur announced the importance and worth of organizing the youth of every parish. This Synod proposed many ideas and stressed the fact that all parishes of the National Church are obliged to pattern themselves after the First Polish National Parish in Scranton in respect to basic principles.

The economic crisis which occurred in the United States at that time, was felt by the members of the Polish National Church. Once again Bishop Hodur began to put forth all his efforts to aid the unemployed, materially and morally. What he did and how much he gave, is engraved deep in the hearts of thousands of poor modest people, who confided in him, and who had been together with him in sorrow and in joy; in success and in failure.

This period brought forth a number of zealous missionaries, priests, who were born and raised in America, brought up in the National Church, educated by Bishop Hodur and graduated from the Polish National Seminary, and were working in responsible positions for the benefit of the National Church in all corners of the United States, and Poland. There was also a great deal done for poor children. These children could find no better protection than that given them by Bishop Hodur. At his initiative, an "Osiedla Wakacyjne" (an annual summer vacation) for the children at the "Spojnia" Farm in Waymart, Pa., was started. This was done in such a manner as to give the largest possible number of children an opportunity to benefit from this summer-time rest. He or-

ganized a Parent-Teacher Association, which gave financial assistance, food, clothing, and school supplies to poor children. There were built a number of buildings on the "Spojnia" Farm to provide a home for the aged and disabled, where those who had no families, could spend the remaining years of their life in peace and quiet.

Towards the end of this period, a notable group of new parishes were organized in the central diocese of Bishop Hodur, comprising the states of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York. In other dioceses of the National Church, the number of parishes was doubled and even in Poland, the National Church was growing stronger. The influence of the National Church reached far and began to give blessed fruit to the endeavors, work and difficulties endured in God's name.

*Rev. Hieronimo Savanarolla, a famous religious Reformer of the 15th Century.

Chapter XIV

The Golden Period In The Work Of Bishop Hodur

In the golden period, the third generation of the Polish immigrants ripened into manhood under the watchful eye of the venerable Clergyman. He regarded with love and pride the expansion of the free-religious group which he had organized many years ago. The younger generation, educated in the National Church, and organized into male and female organizations, came to Scranton from all parts of America, each year on Labor Day, to participate in olympic and gymnastic exercises. There were also held in Scranton, annual conventions of the United Women's Societies A.N.S., which were organized by Bishop Hodur, which now has a membership of around 10,000 Polish mothers and housewives. Many groups and organizations, and representatives of many denominations, came to Scranton to get acquainted with this man, who had placed his entire life on the Sacrificial Altar in serving God and the working people.

It would seem that the venerable clergyman would rest on the laurels, gained through his half-century of sincere work, and be satisfied with his past accomplishments and fame. However, such was not Bishop Hodur's nature. He continued to hold the position of leader and worker among his beloved co-workers. He continued to edit the "Rola Boza"; to lecture on Theology in the Polish National Seminary; to edit with Rev. B. Krupski many school books to be used by the school children in the parochial schools of the National Church; and to lecture at the "Uczelnia Ludowa" (a night school for both

younger and older people). He sailed a number of times to Poland, never becoming discouraged by the opposition he encountered there in his endeavors to gain recognition from the Polish Government for the National Church, equal to that of other religious denominations.

The expansion of the National Church was undeniable. There were, in this period, about 250 parishes and missions in North America, Brazil, Canada and Poland. New groups were constantly organizing; the area of work was expanding; older Bishops and Priests were dying. For that reason there was a need for more leaders and more Priests. At the suggestion of Bishop Hodur in 1935, the General Synod at Chicago, Ill., and the Provincial Synod in Warsaw, Poland, selected three worthy Priests as candidates for the Bishopric, namely: Rev. Joseph Lesniak, Rev. John Misiaszek and Rev. Joseph Padewski. The Consecration of the Bishops-Elect Misiaszek and Padewski, took place on the 26th of August, 1936; and the Consecration of Bishop-Elect Lesniak, took place on the 18th of November, 1937. Bishop Joseph Padewski, in a short time, sailed for Poland to take over the important and very hazardous position of administrator of the National Church in Poland. Oppression still existed in Poland. The Polish Courts were filled with lawsuits, instituted against lay and clerical members of the National Church. Bishop Hodur did everything in his power to try to save these unfortunate people. Under his leadership were gathered 300,000 signatures of members of the National Church, and its sympathizers in America. These signatures were affixed to a petition which was sent to the Polish Government in Warsaw, asking for recognition of the National Church. However, the influence of the Roman Catholic Clergy over the Polish Government was so strong that the attempt to arrive at a legal and just solution, failed.

This arduous work was draining all stored-up energy of the aging Bishop. The serious internal wounds, which he received at the hands of the Roman Catholic ruffians in Poland in 1926, were recurrent and were very painful. He never complained about this, but his closest co-workers knew that he

suffered a great deal from that physical beating. All of this brought about a very serious illness, and his life hung on a mere thread. It seemed that at any moment, he would pass on into the next world. However, thanks to Almighty God, and thanks to the prayers of thousands upon thousands of his co-workers, and to the generous care offered by Bishop Coadjutor J. Misiaszek, Dr. S. Nowicki and his parishioners, he passed the crisis and began to regain his health. Everyone was greatly concerned about him, but the greatest sacrifice and devotion came from Bishop John Misiaszek, a young, energetic and unusually brilliant Bishop, Coadjutor of the Central Diocese, who became the right hand and assistant of the organizer.

Now the dark clouds of war began to appear on the horizon of Europe. Bishop Hodur publicly condemned the plans of usurping German Facists in regard to the peace-loving Polish nation. He sent letters and resolutions on the matter to President F. D. Roosevelt, and the Department of State, pleading that they try to forestall the threat and to frustrate the criminal intention of the Germans to start a new war. Historical events, however, fell in the opposite direction. The outbreak of the war found Bishop Hodur and the National Church in the position of the Good Samaritan. Then began the labor of gathering and assembling all available help for the horrible war. In a short time, the United States was involved in the War. The expansion of the National Church was halted. The male youth of the church took its place in the U.S. armed forces, fighting on all battle fronts of the world. The effort of Bishop Hodur was almost entirely devoted towards giving every possible bit of assistance to the protection of the Star-Spangled Banner. Urged by their Bishop, the members of all National parishes exceeded 100% their quotas in the purchase of U.S. War Savings Bonds. The members of the Scranton Parish alone bought bonds amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars, and this parish can be justly proud of numerous citations it received from the Treasury Department of the United States. In addition to this, Bishop Hodur suggested that newspapers or bulletins be

published and sent out to build up the morale of the members of the National Church, serving in the U.S. armed forces. In a short time, his suggestion became a reality and the monthly bulletin "Forward Christian Soldier" began to go forth to all fighting fronts in the world. This bulletin became very popular, and was greatly appreciated by the young people, who were fighting for their country.

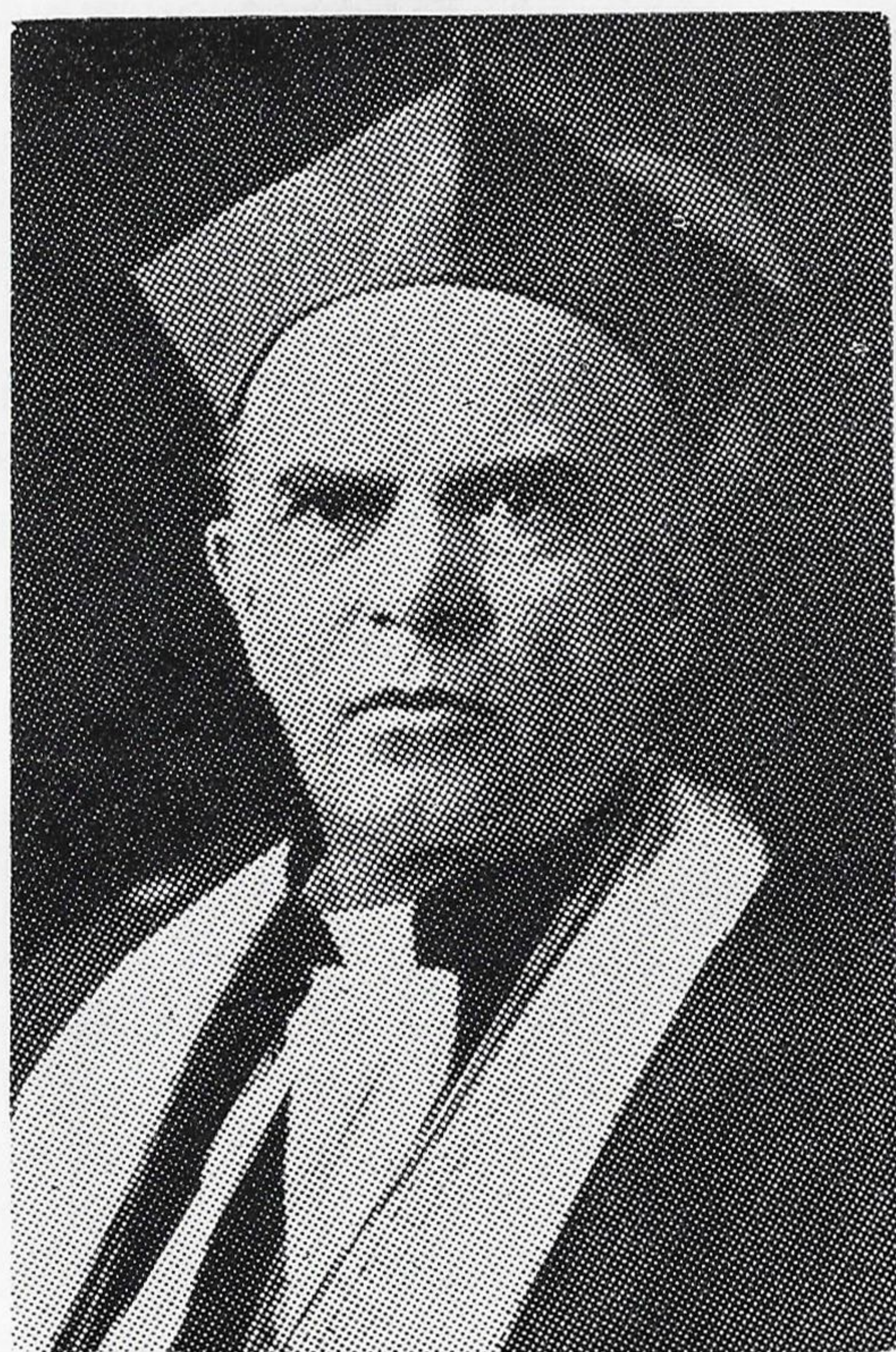
The war was coming to an end; finally, after six years of struggle, the long-awaited and desired Peace came. The young people began to return to their homes. With their return, the National Church again went forward as usual. Bishop Hodur, with tears in his eyes, greeted the returning youths. The greatest care of the 80-year-old fighter for freedom of principles and freedom of the soul, was, and is, the welfare of youth. He directed his co-worker's efforts to insure that the young get employment, receive moral and spiritual protection, and become equipped to take the wheel of leadership in all centres of social and religious life, in conformity with God's will, His laws and the laws of the nation. Through his influence, young men, recently discharged from the U.S. armed forces, began to enter the Polish National Seminary, in order to prepare themselves to become soldiers of Christ. Also missionaries of the National Church, who had been prepared for that task by Bishop Hodur, sailed for re-born Poland so that they could spread God's principles of the National Church.

In this Golden Period of the deeds of Bishop Hodur, he wrote a few books and sacrificed very much of his time in straightening out the administration of the church, and in unifying the liturgical and educational work.

The years left their mark on the fighter for Christ's principles. The horrible war crimes taking place in his beloved Poland and the sufferings, hunger and poverty of her people, greatly pained Bishop Hodur. He sent aid through his church, and her organizations, and begged others to help his unfortunate countrymen. In February, 1946, he received a notification from the Polish Government, to the effect that the National Church was now a legally recognized religious

institution. After 27 years of painful work, and bloodshed and tears for the members of the National Church, success was achieved. For Bishop Hodur, this news was cause for tremendous joy, because his work and his struggles had brought about blessed fruit in Poland.*

*The joy, however, was short-lived. Missionary Bishop Joseph Padewski was arrested in January, 1951, on the Communist charge of "possession of American Dollars". To the people here, that is a strange charge, indeed. Communists, wherever they be in control, seem to get a certain amount of satisfaction out of confusing Americans and other free peoples with ridiculous charges in explaining reasons for arrests. Bishop Padewski was arrested because of his zealousness in carrying on his religious work. While Communists may sometimes appear to favor one religious group over another, they do so in order to weaken such groups. They are, of course, against all religions. Churches are proving to be a great bulwark in the battle against Communism. On May 10, 1951, Bishop Padewski died in a Communist prison at Warsaw, Poland, killed by the oppressors. Bishop Padewski was a zealous worker in the cause of religion. His work in Poland was largely of a missionary nature, which did not make him any more acceptable to the Communist government, now in control in that country.



BISHOP FRANCIS HODUR — 1930

Peroration

From the very day of the birth, on the 14th day of March 1897 of the National Church, Bishop Hodur was, and still is, the leader. Many other leaders of Polish movements in America have either died, settled down to domestic life, been thrown out on the street by an angry people, or have been entirely forgotten.* And yet, Bishop Hodur lives, thanks to the Grace of Almighty God; he still does as much work as ever. He still has to struggle against adverse opposition. "Do not allow yourself to be pushed to the ground; do not allow yourself to be stepped upon, kicked, or lulled to sleep." That was the Creed of Bishop Hodur from childhood. "Do not give in! Follow your inner voice; inspire others to fight against evil; look for light, truth, and new roads to reach your goal", according to that, the life of the organizer of the National Church has been measured. Anyone else in his place, would today, be a millionaire — would sit back, surfeit with glory and satisfaction — but not so Bishop Hodur. His Creed from the very beginning was "Through work, truth and struggle".** In order to support himself in this continuous and strenuous work he had to be alert. Very often he literally had to push himself to the surface with his hands and feet so that he might capably carry out his tasks as Bishop, spiritual leader, editor, and educator. He strove, above all, to be a laborer in all fields of endeavor. He went everywhere; he traveled far and wide throughout the United States and Europe. He preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as interpreted by the National Church; he examined and studied life; and he approached Roman Catholic Bishops and officials of the Vatican in behalf of his cause; He was concerned about the living but did not forget the dead. By receiving the consecration to the Bishop-

ric at the hands of the Old Catholic Bishops of Holland (as fully explained in Chapter VIII), he formed a living chain of Priesthood, linking the Bishops of Holland with the Polish Clergy of the National Church in America and Poland. In this chain, there were joined at first, hundreds and then tens of thousands and finally hundreds of thousands of worshippers, striving for a deeper and more thorough understanding of the Essence of God.

Bishop Hodur never desired rewards, distinction or praise because he felt he could apply to himself the words of the Bible, as follows: "But Jesus called them unto Him and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great, exercise authority upon them (Matt. 20:25). But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your servant. (Matt. 20:26) And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. (Matt. 20:27) Even as the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:28) The fact remains that he did not partake of God's bread gratis, because he served his co-workers, strengthened them, taught them, reprimanded them, when necessary, encouraged them to work, sustained them against moral corruption, and prepared them for great deeds. Throughout 50 years, while many people became closely associated with him, some broke away from him. Some helped him carry the burdens of life, and often collapsed because of the weight placed upon them. These people were filled with faith and loyalty. On the other hand, many came that he might feed them, clothe them, and save them from final moral and material poverty, then left him, and even, in some cases, slandered and hurt him as much as they could.

Strong faith in God and his divine calling aided Bishop Hodur. We quote the words which he spoke after many years of experience: "In life's experiences, by coming in contact with thousands of people of all types, in going forward, through joys and through great sorrows, the faith in the ultimate goal of man has never left me. Certainly faith is the

greatest treasure of man; especially that faith which flows from the deeper understanding of God's Essence . . . This kind of faith is the source of life — life-itself — because it can only spout out there, where there is faith, hope and love”.

Bishop Hodur went forward slowly in all his deeds and works, but never ceased to become richer in all respects. Being surrounded on all sides by hardships and hazards, he remained strong and unshakeable, because he believed that the National Church was an act of God and of vital necessity for the Polish people. He strongly believed that God is the Father of all people without exception; that He did not create them for a Roman Catholic “Hell”, or for the benefit of a clerical caste, headed by the Pope, but rather He created the people for good, happiness and salvation.

With a sweating brow, he cleared dark forests of superstitions, lies, and infirmity. He did a great deal of writing.*** He encouraged worshippers, families, societies and the entire nation to perfection. He awakened them to clean living and the reform of their customs. He endeavored to be a father, an older brother, a protector and a teacher to everyone. Today there still flows forth from this wonderful figure the strength derived of the Spirit of God. Today, in his 80th year he is still an unparalleled preacher, and is still the same modest worker in God's Vineyard, who 50 years ago entered upon God's field to sow His seeds. Under a hail of stones, under a rain of reproaches and oaths, he sowed God's equality, love and justice, on the fields of the people's hearts, with joy and contentment. “And I follow the plough with which I began ploughing on the field of immigrants in the spring of 1897 . . . to me it is always spring . . . that miraculously beautiful spring, because it is the springtime of the spiritual awakening of a group of Polish people in America.”

*Some of these famous people (and some not so famous) expressed themselves to the effect that they would completely destroy the “Niezalezna buda” (non-conforming Barn — as they termed the National Church) within six months.

**Recognized as an able linguist, Bishop Hodur could speak Polish, English, German, Latin and Greek. Since 1937, Bishop Hodur con-

fined most of his religious activity to delivering sermons at church and organizations' services and at funerals. Prior to that time, however, he, as pastor of the church and as bishop, had baptized 4,818 children, performed 1,236 marriages and had conducted 1,784 funerals. He also had ordained over 200 priests and consecrated nine bishops. His first trip to Europe was on January 10, 1898, and since that time he made 18 European trips.

***Writings of Bishop Hodur:—

“Nowe Drogi” (New Roads)

“Chrystus i Jego Kosciol” (Christ and His Church)

“Wstan” (Arise)

“Jaki Kosciol” (Which Church)

“Na Przelomie Wiekow” (Between the Ages)

“Na Progu 40-go Roku” (On the Threshold of the 40th Year)

“Po Drodze Zycia” (Along the Road of Life)

“Ksiega ‘33’ (700 Pages) (Grand Book “33”)

“Apokalipsa XXgo Wieku” (Apokalipse of the XXth Century)

“Rzym a Polska” (Rome — and Poland)

And many others.

Besides, he wrote many dramatic plays; edited newspapers “Straz”, “Rola Boza” and “Trybuna”; Almanacs; and innumerable religious-patriotic poems.

Appendix

The tolling of the bells of St. Stanislaus Cathedral in the early morning of Monday, February 16, 1953, signalized the passing of Bishop Francis Hodur. The Bishop, handicapped by the infirmities of old age and because of total blindness, had, in recent years, relinquished a few of his most pressing duties, but maintained constant touch with the many and varied activities of the church. The possessor of a brilliant mind and retentive memory, Bishop Hodur kept abreast of current events in all fields through the reading to him by priests of the church.

Despite his poor physical condition, he continued to preach at Sunday services in the Cathedral until Sunday, February 8, 1953. One of the last acts of the church founder was an appeal to parishioners for funds for flood-relief work among the sufferers in Holland. News of the death of the aged Bishop came as a shock to members of his church, who had worked with him for more than half a century. The entire church was in mourning. Thousands of people began to congregate in front of the rectory, where the body of the Bishop lay in state.

On Thursday, February 19th, the body of the deceased leader was carried into the Cathedral, accompanied by a large group of Clergymen and thousands of people. From early morning until late at night there was a steady stream of people passing the bier of the late Bishop. Children and adults alike shed bitter tears as they paid their last respects to their beloved leader. That night the heavens began to weep. It rained all night long and did not cease until late the following morning.

On Saturday morning, February 21st, about 9:00, the

sun began to break through the dark clouds. With tens of thousands of church dignitaries, laymen and other mourners, the church paid final earthly tribute to its founder. A large detail of city police handled the traffic which included thousands of cars and buses from the United States and Canada. It was estimated that 10,000 to 15,000 persons passed through the Cathedral before the funeral hour to pay last respects.

At the main altar of the Cathedral, mother edifice of the church, Bishop John Misiaszek, head of the Central Diocese, pontificated at the solemn ritual, while Bishops Joseph Lesniak of Buffalo, and Francis Bonczak of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, celebrated the masses at the side altars. Bishop Leon Grochowski, successor to Bishop Hodur as the presiding bishop of the church, delivered the eulogy. Bishop Lauriston Scaite of Buffalo spoke on behalf of the Episcopal Church. Other prelates at the service were: Bishop Charles Street of Chicago, Bishop Frederick Warnecke of Bethlehem, Bishop Joseph Soltysiak of Manchester, and Bishop Nicholas of the Serbian church. Hundreds of members of the Frederick Chopin and Kalina choirs sang under the direction of Prof. Adam B. Pikulski.

Following the church services, all participants marched the one and one-half miles from the Cathedral to the Grotto of Christ Benign in Minooka, Pa., for the committal rites. The casket was carried by fifteen priests, natives of Scranton, who were ordained in St. Stanislaus Cathedral. Two hundred priests took part in the procession. Over one thousand young men, members of the Young Men's Society of Resurrection marched as an honor guard to the late Bishop. The farewell message was delivered by Bishop John Misiaszek at the Grotto, the burial site.

Eternal peace had come to this man, small in stature but a giant in spirit. The leader came to rest among the thousands of graves of soldiers and champions of Christ, who during their lives, followed him faithfully, building a free, democratic Christian church.

Following is an excerpt from the eulogy delivered by Prime Bishop Leon Grochowski:—

"He has left the ranks of the living, that true apostle of Jesus Christ, Bishop Francis Hodur. He was a true Apostle not only by reason of his episcopal consecration in the genuine Apostolic Old Catholic Church, but preeminently by reason of a virtuous life, lead in accordance with the principles of Jesus Christ, whom he served loyally and faithfully until death.

"I know of no priest or bishop within the last century, who might compare in diligence, faith and christian zeal with the organizer of the Polish National Catholic Church.

"His worn, emaciated and afflicted body; his wasted form, gave one the impression that before him stood a veritable prophet of God, who lived not by flesh and blood, but by faith and spirit. There is no doubt that the superhuman strength of Bishop Hodur was not of earth — earthly; but of God, heavenly.

"This simple unpretentious priest, condemned and excommunicated and ostracized by the community of fellow christians, has given birth to a democratic, Christian, Catholic Church not only in the United States, but also in Canada and Poland.

"Standing beside his coffin and over his hallowed grave, we promise solemnly to carry on the work of Bishop Hodur to which he dedicated 56 years of life and sacrifice and consuming labor. And we are of the conviction that as God has Blessed our father and organizer, He shall continue to Bless with success and prosperity the future of our church.

"We are resolved here and now to dedicate ourselves to perpetuate the work begun by our zealous and Sainted Bishop Francis Hodur."*

*Excerpt from Rev. Joseph Jaworski's translations.

Let Us Consecrate Ourselves

It is not sufficient to consecrate a brick or a wooden church, and decorate altars, but God demands the consecration of each one of us on the altar of a united cause.

Let us consecrate our minds, and seek in God the inspiration necessary for gaining Truth and Justice.

Let us consecrate our hearts, and our love for our National Church, with every drop of blood which our hearts possess, and which awakens us to action.

And let us follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, imitate Him, work with Him, and suffer in the name of His most holy ideals, and in this way we shall fulfill the aim of our life, the source of untold happiness and eternal salvation.

REMEMBER!

Written By Bishop Francis Hodur

Remember, that Poland is located in the middle of Europe and was in her 1000 year old history, an Armageddon, a battle field for Christendom and Western civilization. Poland is situated between two political and economic collossi — between Germany and Russia — both obsessed with the idea, that they are destined to rule not only Europe, but the entire world, and both powers desire not only the fertile soil of Poland, and her mineral riches, but also the splendid Slavic race, endowed by the Providence of God with many great racial qualities. Since the year of 962 — an era begun by the reign of Mieczyslaw I, who was baptized with his Polish people — until 1939, the Polish people have defended themselves from one or the other side in their struggle for life and existence.

From the west the Poles were threatened by German tribes, organized in the powerful German-Roman Empire, and from the east the Polish Kingdom was continually menaced by different Mongolian hordes: first under the leadership of Genghis Khan, then the Tartars and the Turks. Thus, Poland, the Armageddon, fought heroic battles for the safety of Christianity and Western civilization.

Twice in her history Poland saved Europe — in 1683 through her King, John Sobieski, when he saved Austria and Germany, and in 1920, when the Polish Army under the leadership and command of Marshall Pilsudski, generals — Sikorski, Sosnkowski, Haller and the great peasant statesman, Wincenty Witos and others, saved Europe by defeating the Red Army under the walls of Warsaw. And again before our

eyes and in our days, Poland fought for Western civilization and the democracies of the world.

Poland gave her blood for Christianity, its idealism and civilization. Poland gave to the world statesmen, scientists, authors, poets, musicians, noble men. Poland gave to America not only Kosciuszko and Pulaski, not only hundreds of soldiers during the World War, but also gave 4 million souls of good, hard working people, who have enriched with their blood the free and independent nation of Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, Wilson and the Roosevelts.

Remember, that Poland has created in the XV and XVI century the first federation of nations, not through the sword and force, but by the common ideals, common cause, uniting the Polish, Lithuanian, Ukrainian and Prussian kingdoms into one powerful, democratic state, flourishing through the centuries.

This peaceful merger of kingdoms, the spirit of tolerance, independence and patriotism, binding the kingdoms together, was disrupted by the Order of Jesuits brought to Poland by Cardinal Hoze in the sixteenth century. The Jesuit order, through its fanatical teachings, brought about degeneration, intolerance, hatred and anarchy, causing the downfall of an illustrious and free-federated Poland.

Remember, that in this Land of Freedom, under the Star Spangled Banner of America, through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, the Polish National Catholic Church was founded in the city of Scranton, the heart of the Anthracite Coal Region, the home of the International Correspondence School, the largest of its kind in the world, a City of generous and tolerant people though differing in their beliefs, yet remaining the most loyal citizens of the United States.

On the most beautiful glass windows of this Church, you can see the likeness of our Lord, Jesus Christ, Saviour of the World and His Holy Mother Mary; you can see the faces of three apostles — Peter, Paul and John; you can see the great emancipator, President Abraham Lincoln; you can see the greatest reformer and martyr of the Slavic race, John Hus; and you can see two of the greatest philosophers and poets of

the Polish nation, Adam Mickiewicz and Julius Slowacki. Mickiewicz and Slowacki are worthy to be placed along side of Homer, Virgil, Dante, Shakespear, Goethe and Schiller. They were not only poets, but spiritual leaders of Poland and still are.

The latter of the two, Julius Slowacki, cried in his bitterness: "REMEMBER, POLAND, THAT YOUR RUIN LIES IN ROME!"

There are 35 million Poles comprising the second greatest Slavic nation. Twice they lost their freedom — in 1795 and now — in 1939. Poland, however, resurrected in 1919 and will be resurrected again — perhaps this year, perhaps the next year. The world at large wishes Poland her freedom and independence, because she is a great country, and a great nation, destined by the Providence of God to work with other nations for the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, the Kingdom of Love, Freedom and Justice.

Remember, that in your veins flows the blood of great heroes, great leaders, great poets, statesmen and noble, sturdy workmen. Be proud and try to show with your life that you are worthy of your Heritage.

